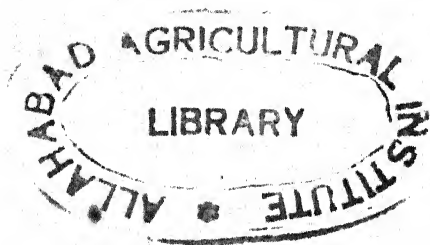


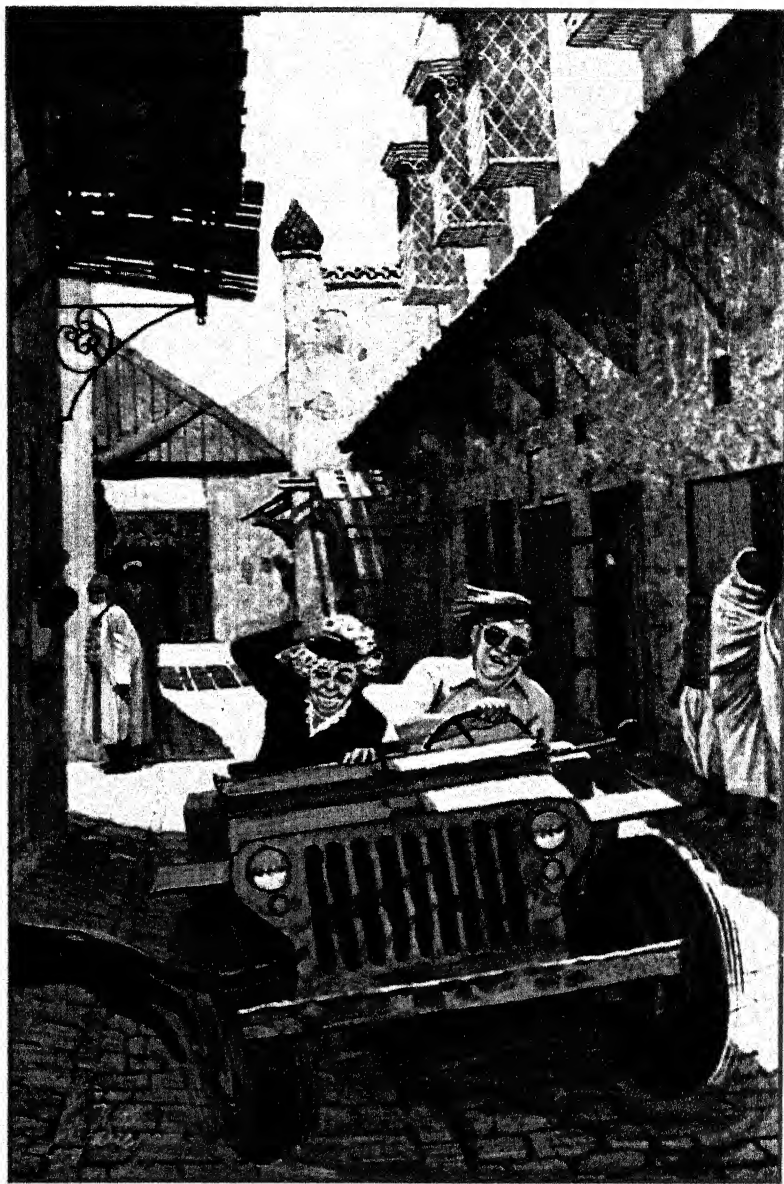
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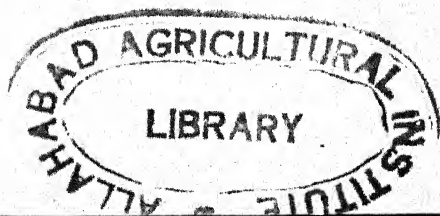


The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax

A CONDENSATION OF THE BOOK BY
DOROTHY GILMAN

America's
most lovable secret agent
rides again

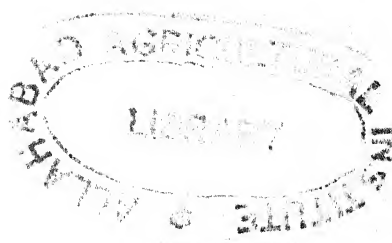
ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN FALTER



When the suave Mr. Carstairs of the CIA needed someone to fly to Istanbul and contact a defecting Russian agent, his thoughts turned at once to Mrs. Emily Pollifax of New Brunswick, New Jersey. After all, who would suspect the nice little lady in the flowered hat of being anything other than what she seemed?

The trouble was that in the espionage business *nothing* is what it seems. And Mrs. Pollifax soon found herself not only embroiled with a gang of ruthless enemy agents, but on the wrong side of the Turkish police as well. There were moments during the desperate chase across Anatolia when she thought wistfully of the Garden Club meeting she had foregone in order to serve her country.

But, as readers of *The Unexpected* Mrs. Pollifax will remember, Mrs. Pollifax is at her best when the odds are long. Here, with a lot of gentle persuasion and a karate chop or two, she once again triumphantly confounds the professionals in the world of international intrigue.



M_{RS.} POLLIFAX had attended church that Sunday morning, and her hat—a garden of white daisies and green leaves—still sat on her head as she ate lunch in the sunny kitchen of her apartment. She had a tendency to be absentminded about hats—in fact since beginning karate lessons she had become forgetful about a number of things—and because she would be going out again soon she had left her hat where it could not be forgotten. This freed her mind for more important matters, such as a review of pressure points, or how to unbalance an assailant with an elbow-upward strike.

But Mrs. Pollifax was conscientious by nature, and if her karate textbook lay to the right of her plate, the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* lay on its left. She sighed over her choice but it was the *Times* to which she turned first, quickly scanning the headlines. COMMUNIST AGENT DEFECTS IN ISTANBUL, THEN VANISHES, she read. WOMAN HAD SOUGHT SANCTUARY IN BRITISH CONSULATE, MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARS.

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Pollifax delightedly, and promptly forgot both lunch and karate. Some months earlier a small episode of espionage had inserted itself like an exclamation point in Mrs. Pollifax's long, serene life. Afterward she had resumed her quiet existence with a sense of enrichment. Now she plunged into the news story with the fascination of an amateur confronted by her professional counterpart, for not only was the defecting agent a

woman but her past was so lengthy that Mrs. Pollifax guessed that not too many years separated them in age.

The woman had leaped into the news by arriving at the British Consulate in Istanbul, breathless and ragged, to beg for help. After identifying herself as Magda Ferenci-Sabo she had been put to bed—at ten o'clock on a summer evening—with a sedative and a cup of tea. In the morning she had vanished, and rumors swept the Turkish city that she had been abducted.

This in itself was front-page news, and Mrs. Pollifax eagerly turned to the details of Magda Ferenci-Sabo's life, pieced together by an enterprising journalist. The story alternately shocked and educated Mrs. Pollifax, who had been a spy for only a few brief weeks. "As an international beauty of the thirties, Ferenci-Sabo appeared at all the right places with the wrong people," commented the author of the article, and there was a blurred picture of her—all teeth and long hair—laughing on a beach with Mussolini. Then there were the marriages: first a French playboy mysteriously killed a year after the honeymoon (the journalist managed to suggest that he had been murdered by his bride); a wealthy German who later became a high official in the Nazi party; and finally a Hungarian Communist writer named Ferenci-Sabo, who was murdered in 1956 by freedom fighters. Following this the woman had disappeared—into Russia, it was believed, where it was rumored that she was actively involved in intelligence work.

What an extraordinary woman, mused Mrs. Pollifax, and obviously a ruthless one as well. What possible motive could she have for defecting *now*? Reluctantly Mrs. Pollifax put aside the newspaper because it was almost two o'clock of a Sunday afternoon, and before leaving for the Garden Club film she wanted to compose a grocery list for the week. She had just begun when the telephone rang. Pencil and list in hand she walked into the living room and before picking up the receiver added *eggs, orange juice*. "Hello," she said absently, remembering that she had promised cookies for the Art Association tea next Sunday.

"Mrs. Emily Pollifax?" said a bright young voice.

"Speaking," said Mrs. Pollifax, and wrote *sugar, vanilla, walnuts*.

"One moment, please . . ."

The point of Mrs. Pollifax's pencil snapped as she recognized a voice she had not expected to hear again. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Pollifax," it said. "I'm certainly glad to have found you at home."

"Why, Mr. Carstairs!" she cried. "How nice to hear from you!"

"Thank you," he said graciously. "I wonder if I might ask two questions of you that will save us both invaluable time."

"Why not?" said Mrs. Pollifax. "Except I can't think of anything you don't already know about me."

Carstairs said, "I don't know, for instance, if you would be available—or even interested—in doing another job for me."

Mrs. Pollifax's heart began to beat quickly. "Yes," she said, recklessly, and promised herself the luxury of thinking about it later.

"Good," said Carstairs. "Question number two: are you free to leave in thirty minutes?"

Mrs. Pollifax was incredulous. Her glance fell to her grocery list and then moved to the unwashed dishes. "But where?" she gasped. "For how long?"

Carstairs's voice was patient. "Put it this way. Have you any vital commitments between today and next Sunday?"

"Only my karate lesson," said Mrs. Pollifax. "And then I'm to pour at the Art Association tea a week from today."

"An interesting combination," said Carstairs dryly. "You did say karate?"

"Yes indeed," admitted Mrs. Pollifax with a rush of enthusiasm. "I've been enjoying it enormously and I rather think that Lorraine—retired police sergeant Lorraine Brown—is quite shaken by my success." She stopped, appalled. "What on earth would I *tell* people? How would I explain my—just dashing off?"

"Your daughter-in-law in Chicago will have to be ill," said Carstairs. "We can, for instance, monitor any long-distance calls that your son might get from your neighbors in New Brunswick, New Jersey—but that's a problem we'll work out. Count on us."

"Yes," said Mrs. Pollifax, and took a deep breath. "Then I dare say I'd better hang up and get started."

"A police car will be at your door in twenty-two minutes. My secretary put a call through the moment you said yes—"

"How is Bishop?" asked Mrs. Pollifax fondly.

"—and in the meantime pack a small bag. You'll be briefed within the hour. Good-by for now." Carstairs abruptly rang off.

Mrs. Pollifax slowly put down the receiver. "Well!" she exclaimed softly, reflecting upon how quickly life could change. Her gaze fell on the clock and she jumped to her feet. After she had rinsed the lunch dishes she changed quickly into her navy blue knit suit, adjusted the flowered hat on her head and packed walking shoes, cold cream and travel kit. She wrote notes canceling newspaper and milk deliveries, and telephoned Lorvale.

"I'm off on a little trip, Lorvale," she explained. "I'm sorry, but my daughter-in-law in Chicago needs me for a few days. I shall have to miss my Thursday lesson."

"I'm sorry," he said reproachfully. "You won't have a chance to practice your omo-tude, will you?"

"No, Lorvale," she replied solemnly.

Then she wrote a note to Miss Hartshorne across the hall. This was more difficult because Miss Hartshorne had met Mrs. Pollifax's son and daughter-in-law at Christmas. The note had to be couched in dramatic enough terms to explain Mrs. Pollifax's precipitous departure—thus canceling a lunch date with her—yet contain enough information so that Miss Hartshorne would not worry unduly over Roger's wife and telephone Chicago to express her concern.

When the knock came upon her door Mrs. Pollifax was at the telephone again, having nearly forgotten the Art Association tea on Sunday. "Come in, it's unlocked," she called, and turned to nod at the young man who entered her living room—he was undoubtedly the plainclothes policeman sent by Mr. Carstairs. "It's my taxi," she blandly told the president of the Art Association. "Good-by, dear."

"Mrs. Pollifax?" said the young man as she hung up. "Lieutenant Mullin. The car's outside. This your bag?"

"Oh—thank you." Mrs. Pollifax picked up her purse, and hesitated. Glancing with finality at her dear, familiar apartment, she allowed herself for the first time to compare the world that she was leaving—safe, secure and predictable—with the world she was about to enter—insecure, difficult and totally unpredictable. "At my age," she murmured doubtfully, and then she recalled that at her age, less than a year ago, she had been held captive in an Al-

banian prison for a week, which had proven extremely informative and lively. Before she led an escape party to the Adriatic she had met two Red Chinese generals, a Russian spy and a rogue of an American agent. It was quite unlikely that she would have met them in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

"We're in a hurry," Mullin reminded her.

"Yes," said Mrs. Pollifax, taking a deep breath as she closed the door firmly behind her. As she slipped her note to Miss Hartshorne under the door of apartment 4-C she experienced a sudden exhilaration: she had committed herself to another adventure.

When the elevator opened at the first floor Mullin hastened ahead to hold the outer glass door for her, and they walked into the sticky heat of a July afternoon. The unmarked police car was at the curb, next to the NO PARKING sign, with a second man at the wheel. Mrs. Pollifax was no sooner seated, with Mullin beside her, than the driver's foot hit the accelerator, a hidden siren began to scream and Mrs. Pollifax found herself suddenly gazing into the eyes of her astonished pastor as he barely avoided the racing car. "*C'est la vie*," she called out gaily, fluttering her hand at him, and then they were leaving the city behind, cars scattering to right and left at the sound of the siren.

Moments later they entered the gates of the small local airport. The police car bounced across the field and came to a screaming halt in front of a helicopter whose blades were already beating the air. Mrs. Pollifax, clinging desperately to her flowered hat, was boosted into the copter, and almost before she had re-worked her hatpins they were landing at a much larger airfield.

They appeared to be expected: a man in a wrinkled beige suit left a waiting car and raced toward them. "Mrs. Pollifax?" he shouted, as she was dropped from the cockpit into his arms. "Over here, they're holding the plane. Jamison's my name."

"Yes, but where am I?" she gasped. "And where am I going?"

"You're at Kennedy International," he told her, and hurried her into the car. "That plane over there is the flight to Washington. Carstairs will brief you there before you leave the country."

So she was to leave the country; Mrs. Pollifax felt a shiver of the irrevocable, of forces in motion that could no longer be halted. The

car stopped, the door was thrown open and she was hurried up steps and into the plane, where she and Jamison were belted into their seats at once. In less than an hour they were landing again. "Dulles Airport," Jamison said. He guided her through the terminal to the parking area.

From a long black limousine emerged Carstairs, tall, thin, his crew-cut hair pure white against his tanned face. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Pollifax," he said gravely.

"I'm delighted to see you," said Mrs. Pollifax, clasping his hand. "It's seemed such a long time. How have things been going?"

Carstairs said cheerfully, "Abominably, as always." He gestured toward a stolid-looking young man in a dark suit and black tie. "I'd like you to meet Henry Miles. He is going to be keeping an eye on you." Carstairs added with a faint smile, "This time I'm taking no chances. All right, Jamison, take Henry to seat twenty-two and make sure that plane doesn't get away!" To Mrs. Pollifax he said, "You're about to depart for Istanbul. Come and sit in my car; we've only fifteen minutes in which to talk."

"ISTANBUL!" exclaimed Mrs. Pollifax.

"Yes, on a ticklish courier assignment, the necessity of which became obvious only thirty minutes before I telephoned you." They were seated now in the rear of the limousine.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Pollifax, "I was reading a news story from Istanbul only a few minutes before you telephoned! Does this have anything to do with the Ferenci-Sabo woman, the Communist spy who tried to defect?"

"A great deal to do with her," Carstairs said. He unzipped an attaché case bulging with papers. "Except that rather a lot has happened since that news story you read. Ferenci-Sabo reached the British Consulate Friday night, God knows how, and was taken in. No, she's not been found. This is Sunday afternoon—already late evening in Istanbul—and in two days agents have poured into the city from every point of the globe, their hope being either to find Ferenci-Sabo and offer her sanctuary in their country, or find her and silence her, depending upon their political stance."

"She really was abducted then," said Mrs. Pollifax. "I thought

she might have been hidden away somewhere by the British."

"She was abducted all right," Carstairs said grimly, "and we think it was by Communists. The curious point is that she was abducted and not murdered. If it was silence her captors wanted, they need only have killed her in her bed at the consulate. So it seems that Ferenci-Sabo still has more value to them alive than dead. I've called upon you, Mrs. Pollifax, because in a city teeming with professionals you'd lack the slightest aura of corruption or professionalism, yet at the same time"—his mouth curved wryly—"you give every evidence of being a resourceful courier."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Pollifax, "but a courier for what?"

He said quietly, "We have heard from Ferenci-Sabo."

"You?" she said in astonishment. "The CIA? But how? Why?"

He held up his hand. "Please. We know almost nothing except she's apparently eluded her kidnappers and is alive and in hiding in Istanbul. The message, received late this morning, said only that Ferenci-Sabo would go each evening at eight o'clock to the lobby of the Hotel Itep—a small Turkish hotel in the old section—and look for someone carrying a copy of *Gone with the Wind*. We immediately notified our agent in Istanbul, who presented himself there with the book at eight o'clock." Carstairs's mouth tightened. "Word of his death reached us thirty minutes before I telephoned you, Mrs. Pollifax. I cannot regard it as an accident."

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Pollifax soberly.

"Yes. At eight fifteen he was seen walking out of the hotel with a woman companion—and a car suddenly went berserk in the street, pinning him to the wall and killing him. The woman vanished into the crowd. You are in effect replacing a dead man, Mrs. Pollifax—but with one difference. No one could possibly suspect you of being an agent. In the world of espionage there are only two living people who have ever met you and this is the way I plan to keep it. Henry Miles knows nothing except that you are to be kept under surveillance. You are to send no cables nor contact me at all. You are to trust no one, and above all," he concluded grimly, "watch for reckless drivers when crossing streets in Istanbul. Now you will be happy to learn that this time you travel with a bona fide passport, accomplished for you in an hour's time."

"How nice," said Mrs. Pollifax, as he handed it to her. "Even my photograph!"

"Yes, we took one for our files, you may remember. Also money," he said, handing her a manila envelope. "Rather a lot of money because of the unpredictability of the—er—situation. And in this second envelope is money for Ferenci-Sabo, as well as a passport for her in another name. She will have to supply a photograph, but it has all the necessary stampings proving that she entered Turkey legally a week ago, as an American citizen. After you have given her whatever assistance is needed you are to vanish. Here are your plane tickets," he added, "as well as an especially gaudy edition of *Gone with the Wind*. A reservation has been made for you at the Hotel Itep—Henry Miles will have a room there, too, but you are to avoid him, you understand? And on Saturday morning you are to fly back whether you have made contact or not."

"All the way to Turkey and back in six days?" said Mrs. Pollifax. "My dear Mr. Carstairs, I shall almost be back in time for the Art Association tea on Sunday."

"As a matter of fact you will be," he said. He drew out a slip of paper. "I'm giving you the name of a man in Istanbul who can be trusted in case of emergency. He's lived there for a number of years, and you can rely on him to advise and help—but only if you have absolutely no other recourse. He's very highly placed, so please be discreet if you go to him."

"An agent?" inquired Mrs. Pollifax cheerfully.

Carstairs looked pained. "I do wish you'd not leap to such dramatic conclusions. He's a noted criminologist who writes and teaches. He is Dr. Guillaume Belleaux. The name of the university with which he is connected and his address are on this paper. There's no need to hide it. Dr. Belleaux is highly respected by the Turkish government as well as ours, and any tourist might legitimately carry his name. Now." He smiled. "Are there any questions?"

"Yes." She said slowly, "You've set up a meeting with a woman who is a notorious Communist agent." She hesitated. "Yet nobody has seen her, and your Istanbul agent was killed trying to meet her. Don't you suspect a trap? Do you really trust this woman?"

Carstairs smiled faintly. "Good point, Mrs. Pollifax, and this is

why I insisted on briefing you personally." He handed her a slip of yellow paper. "This is how we were advised about the rendezvous at the Hotel Itep."

Mrs. Pollifax read:

ISTANBUL: ARRIVED AT SIX. ENJOYED EIGHT HOURS ITEP OTELL.
WISH YOU COULD JOIN ME. SEND RED QUEEN OR BLACK JACK BEFORE FRIDAY. ALICE DEXTER WHITE

Mrs. Pollifax frowned. "Should I know what this means?"

Carstairs laughed. "On the contrary. It took the coding department several trips to the archives to identify it. It was one of a simple series of codes used by a small group of agents working in Occupied Paris during World War Two. Code Six—this one, if you note the time of arrival—automatically stood for rendezvousing in a hotel lobby, with a copy of *Gone with the Wind* if identification was necessary. Code Five stood for a metro station—I believe a Bible was used there—and so on. Red Queen was an agent named Agatha Simms, unfortunately killed several years ago in Hong Kong, and Black Jack was another agent in that group."

"And Alice Dexter White?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

Carstairs looked down at the attaché case on his knees. "A very dear friend of mine, which is how I come into this," he said quietly. "A very remarkable woman to whom I twice owe my life, and with whom I worked during those war years." He raised his eyes to hers, and tapped the yellow cable. "This woman is one of our most valued agents but Alice Dexter White is only her code name. Her real name is Magda Ferenci-Sabo."

Mrs. Pollifax caught her breath sharply. "Good heavens," she gasped, "but this turns everything upside down!"

DURING the first hour of her transatlantic flight Mrs. Pollifax had time to consider the events of the afternoon. Her head still spun from her briefing with Carstairs. He had gone on to say, "I'm assuming that once she has passport and money Ferenci-Sabo will

know what to do. You may be called upon to help with a disguise, but you remain, principally, a courier. If by any chance it proves too 'hot' for her to leave the country legally, this is when I recommend that you approach Dr. Belleaux."

"Why did she use such an ancient code?" Mrs. Pollifax had asked, understanding now the choice of *Gone with the Wind*.

"Probably it's the only one she could recall from memory," he'd said. "Codes were more primitive then. In those days she was Frau Wetzelmann," he added reminiscently.

"And you were Black Jack," guessed Mrs. Pollifax.

"Yes," he said quietly, and then, "Mrs. Pollifax, we don't know why Ferenci-Sabo came to Istanbul, or how, but this is one notorious Communist agent who must be allowed to defect. Not only for her sake—and what we owe her—but for ours as well, because if ever she were forced to talk—" He shuddered.

Mrs. Pollifax shivered a little, too, now. It was all too overwhelming. She opened up the copy of *House Beautiful* on her lap, but soon she closed her eyes and slept.

Monday's dawn had arrived when they reached London. Mrs. Pollifax disembarked from the plane and, after purchasing a small guidebook to Turkey, made her way to the airport lounge to await the departure of her plane to Istanbul. She noticed that Henry Miles found a seat nearby. They exchanged casual glances and then he endeared himself to Mrs. Pollifax by slowly, wickedly closing one eyelid and winking at her. Until that wink he had appeared impersonal; now she realized that a second Henry Miles walked, sat, stood and breathed inside that first Henry Miles.

The Istanbul flight was announced, and Mrs. Pollifax boarded the plane and took her seat near the wing, with Miles several rows ahead. This time she had a seat companion, who arrived breathlessly, with every male turning to stare at her. Mrs. Pollifax stared, too. The girl was very young; she was dressed in a dramatic outfit of greens and purples crowned with a brilliant green stovepipe hat which she removed, displaying a flawless profile. Her eyelids and lips had been painted white, her long eyelashes were ink black and she wore her straight red-gold hair to the waist. Once she had settled herself she turned to look at Mrs. Pollifax. She gazed

frankly at the wisps of hair escaping Mrs. Pollifax's flowered hat, met her admiring glance and smiled.

"Hello," she said. "Do I frighten you? I do some of my mother's friends—not that Mother has many pious friends but she does have tons of pious acquaintances, Daddy being an MP."

"Parliament!" said Mrs. Pollifax rapturously.

"You're American! What fun! Yes, Daddy's in Parliament, and I've just become a model. Isn't it marv? I'm on my way to Athens for a job. Tony and the cameras are already there—they're doing me in autumn clothes against the Acropolis."

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Pollifax, beaming, "I'd forgotten we stop at Athens. I'm going through to Istanbul."

The girl's face lit up. "I say, that's wonderfull! My brother Colin is there. If I've time I'm hoping to fly over and see him." A faint shadow dimmed her preposterously radiant face. "At least I hope he's still there. He has such an awful time with just—well, with just the *mechanics* of living. It's unbelievable." She sighed.

"What does he do in Istanbul?" asked Mrs. Pollifax, intrigued.

"Well, he's been given a job with Uncle Hubert," the girl explained. "My family simply gave up on Colin and nobody knew what else to do with him. I suppose every large family has somebody who just doesn't fit. And that person grows up—well, feeling *invisible*. And it turns into a vicious circle because it's so easy not to notice someone invisible, but nobody understands this."

Mrs. Pollifax smiled. She decided she liked this girl. "You're fond of him then. That is a form of understanding."

"Oh, I understand what's wrong," the girl said. "Colin has no confidence in himself. He's very precise by nature but he can't find anything to be precise about. I'm very bad for him because he brings out the maternal in me. I'm a Moon Child, you see—born under the sign of Cancer, and simply seething with motherly instincts. He hates that. Quite rightly, too—he is terribly intelligent. Oh, I do hope I'll have time to stop and see him, but I despair. It'll probably rain, and the filming get held up for days—"

"You could write to him then," suggested Mrs. Pollifax.

The girl stared at her. "Write?" she repeated blankly.



Mrs. Pollifax saw that the word was utterly foreign to this girl and her generation. "It's a way to keep in touch."

"Yes, I know what you mean," said the girl musingly. "We do rocket about a great deal, my friends and I. Still, I do feel in touch with Colin, even when I never see him."

"Then you have something very rare and wonderful," pointed out Mrs. Pollifax. "A bond."

The girl nodded, beaming now. "You do see it, don't you? But what takes you to Istanbul?"

What indeed, thought Mrs. Pollifax, and announced that she was going to do some sight-seeing, and also meet a friend. "A friend who has been exploring the Middle East," she added.

"But that's marv," said the girl. "Oh, I do wonder if—how long will you be in Istanbul?"

"Until Saturday morning," said Mrs. Pollifax calmly. "I wonder if I can guess what you're thinking."

The girl laughed delightedly. "Of course you can, because you're a dear, and probably psychic as well. But you know, Colin just *might* be useful to you, having been in Istanbul for four months. And if I shouldn't have the time to fly over—it's so vital Colin feel that somebody cares—"

Mrs. Pollifax smiled. "If you'll give me his address I'll try."

"Oh, you *are* a dear," the girl said, and removed a ring from her finger. "Give him this; it's his really. He gave it to me when he left. It's a game we've played for years, handing it back and forth for luck. I wore it when he went off to Oxford—except he flunked out," she explained with a sigh. "Then he wore it when he sold vacuum cleaners—but Mother was the only one who bought one—and then he sold encyclopedias. Anyway, give him this and my love."

"But this is a valuable signet ring," remarked Mrs. Pollifax. "And really there may be no time at all—"

"Then you can just mail it back to me—I'll give you my address as well," she said. She had begun laboriously printing on a sheet of paper. When she handed it to Mrs. Pollifax it read: COLIN RAMSEY, RAMSEY ENTERPRISES LTD., 23 ZIKZAK DAR SOKAK, STAMBOUL.

To this she had added, MISS MIA RAMSEY, % HEATHERTON AGENCY, PICCADILLY CIRCUS, LONDON W.1.

"And I am Emily Pollifax," said Mrs. Pollifax. "Also a Moon Child," she added with a twinkle.

"No! Are you really?" said Mia breathlessly. "Then that's what I felt about you. Colin's Capricorn, that's why he's so inherently precise. Most of my family's Gemini," she added broodingly. "A restless sign to be born under, you know. Tony's Libra," she confided. "He wants to marry me."

"Tony?"

"The man in charge of all this," she said with a sweeping gesture that included her outrageous costume. "The one waiting for me in Athens. He's a marv photographer." Mia turned thoughtful. "I'm only eighteen; do you think it possible to love at eighteen?"

"In general, no," said Mrs. Pollifax.

Mia nodded. "That's what I think, too. It's terribly romantic—but I do want to find out who I am first. I don't want to be married umpteen times. It's so unstable."

At this point they were interrupted by lunch—what with the time changes, the meals were growing very confusing—and then they were landing in Athens. As the plane taxied down the runway and came to a stop Mia looked at Mrs. Pollifax with huge eyes. "Do you realize we may never meet again?" she said in dismay.

Mrs. Pollifax smiled. "But it's so very nice that we've met at all."

Mia laughed. "There I go, being greedy again—you're much the wiser." Standing, she leaned over and impulsively kissed Mrs. Pollifax on the cheek. "God bless," she said warmly, and placing her stovepipe hat securely on her head she walked down the aisle, every eye on the plane fastened upon her receding figure.

MRS. POLLIFAX landed at an airport whose name she could not pronounce and went through Customs in a state of numbness. Not even her first glimpse of a mosque and the delicate spire of a minaret roused her from this alarming sense of detachment; she was experiencing now the effect of crossing an ocean and a continent in the space of seventeen hours. In America it would be Monday morning and she would be preparing to shop at the A&P, but instead she was in Istanbul and it was late Monday afternoon. As the airline bus carried her toward the city there was added to

her blurredness a steady cacophony of noise: horns honking, donkeys braying and vendors shouting.

When Mrs. Pollifax reached the Hotel Itep and registered, showing her passport, it was just five o'clock. There was no sign of Henry, which reminded her that they were in Istanbul now and there would be no more reassuring winks. The desk clerk himself showed her to her room on the second floor and left her there staring longingly at the bed. It was covered with a brilliant scarlet afghan and looked voluptuously soft. Mrs. Pollifax moved toward it. Then she remembered that in less than three hours she must take up her post in the lobby with her copy of *Gone with the Wind*, and for that she must be alert. She had already slept on the plane, and another nap could only leave her woolly-headed. What she needed was something to clear her mind.

A walk! she thought. A good brisk walk! She doubted that the bazaars would still be open; then she remembered Mia Ramsey's brother. "What a nice idea, and it shouldn't take long!" she exclaimed aloud. She washed her face in very cold water, left the room without opening her suitcase, walked down the heavily carpeted stairs and strolled out into the bustling street. According to her guidebook Istanbul was a city divided by bridges, water and the geographical coincidence of existing upon two continents, Europe and Asia. Mrs. Pollifax noticed that the newer section, called Beyoğlu, contained the Hilton Istanbul; therefore it must also contain the newer residences, the higher-priced hotels and most of the tourists. The older section, called Stamboul, appeared to hold most of the minarets, mosques, bazaars and native hotels, as well as herself and Mia Ramsey's brother.

With this settled she hailed a taxi. The driver greeted her effusively, swore by Allah that Zikzak was not far, that his taxi was the best in Stamboul and that he was a fine driver. Delighted by her resourcefulness, Mrs. Pollifax sat back in anticipation. What struck her forcibly was the patina of antiquity everywhere; there was a grandeur in Stamboul's flaking walls, peeling stucco and eroded columns. The city also impressed her with its gaiety, and her ears began to sort out the sounds that had dismayed her earlier. A great deal of commerce was being transacted from the backs of

donkeys, upon which were carried baskets of flowers, bread, tin-ware, bales of cloth, jugs of water, herbs and sweets, all of which had to be advertised loudly and incessantly. Children played and shouted. Strange music drifted out of shuttered windows and doors as they drove up and down unbelievably steep streets.

But gradually the streets grew narrower, darker and less traveled, and Mrs. Pollifax experienced a growing sense of alarm. For the first time she remembered the two envelopes in her purse, bulging with money, and when the taxi stopped in a dead-end alley with a high wall along one side, she was certain she was going to be robbed. She was wondering if she dared try out her karate when the driver jumped out, jerked his head toward a ramshackle building and said, "Twenty-three Zikzak."

"Are you sure?" she asked doubtfully.

"*Evet, evet,*" he said, opening the door for her. Mrs. Pollifax paid the man—or overpaid him, she reflected wryly, having no firm grasp of the country's lira and kuruş—and felt a shock of relief as she walked across the alley to the lopsided door. She was indeed in the correct place, but what an astonishingly unprepossessing place it was! A neat sign over the bell said *RAMSEY ENTERPRISES LTD.* A small dusty sign below it read *Ramsey Documentaries in Rear*; a third sign read *Hubert Ludlow Ramsey, Esq.*

Mrs. Pollifax pushed the bell. Nothing happened. Sounds of traffic came dimly to her ears, and from a distance the chant of a *muezzin*. She turned her back on the front door, walked firmly down the beaten-earth driveway toward Ramsey Documentaries and came out upon a small cobbled courtyard walled with bougainvillea. A dusty van was parked beside an equally dusty old jeep, and beyond them lay a series of small cement-block buildings: a garage, a building which was obviously the house, and a small office bearing a sign *RAMSEY ENTERPRISES LTD.* The door to this office stood open, and as Mrs. Pollifax approached it she heard someone swearing—steadily and scathingly—in English.

"Good afternoon," called out Mrs. Pollifax cheerfully.

The swearing broke off, and a round, owlsh face peered around the door. "What the devil!" exclaimed the young man. "I say—I'm awfully sorry, you overheard the swearing?"

"Every word," said Mrs. Pollifax amiably. "Is it a habit of yours?"

"It's becoming one," he said crossly, as he appeared in the door. He was small and compact and was wearing a fierce scowl, dusty khaki shorts, dusty shirt and dusty boots. "I'm swearing because I've been doing some filming while my uncle's away and not one frame has come out yet. My uncle will probably fire me."

"Why didn't the pictures come out?"

"Because yesterday I left the lens cap on, and today they're all light-struck."

"You must be Colin Ramsey," said Mrs. Pollifax warmly, extending her hand.

"I am," he said suspiciously. "Are you a friend of Uncle Hu's?"

"No, of your sister's," she told him. "That is, I flew from London to Athens with her today—my name's Emily Pollifax—and she asked me to stop in and give you her love and this ring."

His face brightened. "Did she really!" He took the ring and looked at it. "Beautiful Mia—what on earth is she doing in Athens! I suppose she's left school again?"

"I didn't hear anything about school; she's modeling."

He nodded, still staring down at the ring. "Funny," he mused, "this came from Uncle Hu when we were still in the nursery. He said it was magic, and for years I wore it faithfully on a string around my neck. That's how it all started, and here I am working for Uncle Hu now, and the ring's here, too." He laughed bitterly, and glanced up. "It's really decent of you to have bothered with this, and I'm being terribly rude, boring you with my blighted life. May I offer you a lemonade?"

"You weren't being rude; you were feeling sorry for yourself," pointed out Mrs. Pollifax firmly. "And yes, it *was* decent of me, except that I had some time to spare, and also I was curious. Yes, I will have a lemonade, thank you."

"Curious because of Mia?" he asked.

"Not entirely. I thought it soothing to have the address of someone here, in a strange country." She stopped. "It just occurs to me: I'm probably feeling a touch of homesickness."

He nodded. "Your first trip abroad?"

"Yes and no," she said adroitly. "The first alone, at least."

"Then do come in," he suggested. "Although if you're traveling alone who's the chap with you, your guide?"

Mrs. Pollifax looked at him blankly. "There's no one with me." She followed Colin's glance toward the alley. "What is it?"

He grinned. "A chap in a dark suit with a camera; he's strolled past twice. Tourists don't usually get this far."

Henry, thought Mrs. Pollifax. A rush of gratitude flooded her at such touching protectiveness, and then she put the thought aside and turned and followed Colin toward the house. "But how do you happen to notice such things?" she asked.

He smiled ruefully as he held open the door to the house. "Compensation, I guess—observation is my only talent. I'm a complete embarrassment to a brilliant family—it's why they've shipped me out here to Turkey." They entered a bleak, cheerless kitchen dominated by a very old refrigerator with coils on the top. "Purest Soho, circa nineteen twenty," commented Colin with a gesture toward the room. "Do have a seat."

Mrs. Pollifax slid gratefully onto a bench beside a long trestle table. "But what kind of brilliant family?" she asked.

"Successful," said Colin, removing ice trays from the refrigerator. "They climb mountains. They excel at rugby and take firsts at Oxford. My father's an MP. My two brothers went to Sandhurst and they'll either be generals or MPs. You met my sister. She's the baby of the family, but if she's taken up modeling she'll be a top model on all the magazine covers by Christmas. My mother's just been in jail for picketing—some kind of labor protest. That's being a success these days, too." He handed Mrs. Pollifax a glass of lemonade and sat down gloomily across the table from her.

Mrs. Pollifax said tartly, "Well, if they're all extroverted and like heights, that's their prerogative. What do *you* like best?"

He looked thoughtful. "It's hard to say. I'm an absolute physical coward. Alpine climbing simply terrifies me, boxing appalls me and fencing scares the hell out of me. The army didn't turn out to be my cup



of tea and I flunked out of Oxford." He brightened. "Frankly I like it *here*. It's a joy having nobody care that I'm a Ramsey, and Uncle Hu doesn't give tuppence for climbing mountains; he's too busy running this rum outfit. But damn it, just see what's happened. Uncle Hu goes off to Erzurum for a week, and after showing me the work for four months he leaves me with just ten minutes of filming, and I'm already blowing the whole thing. He runs a shoe-string operation; how long can he afford me?"

Mrs. Pollifax glanced curiously around the barren room. "You mean this address is all there is to Ramsey Enterprises Limited?"

Colin nodded. "In the summer it's mostly a matter of traveling around the country making films—travelogues, industrial films, that sort of thing. He'll take on any assignment, but his real passion is documentaries about Turkey—he loves the place. Winters he puts chains and a snowplow on the van and goes on tour. Shows Turkish films and occasionally a film from England. There are thousands of little villages in Turkey and for some it's their only contact with the outside world. It's a very casual operation but it functions."

"And your family like him?"

Colin wrinkled his nose. "He used to be Sir Hubert, with all the usual Ramsey accomplishments. Came out of World War Two loaded with medals and honors, including a knighthood. Then one day he chucked it all, packed a duffel bag and left England. Because of a woman, my mother said. No, they don't *like* him but they leave him alone." He sighed. "It's hard to explain my family; they're not monsters, you know, they're marvelous really. Colorful, competitive, uninhibited. I'd have no problems at all if—"

"If you were also colorful, competitive and uninhibited."

"Yes." He grinned at her. "But what brings you to Turkey?"

Mrs. Pollifax was suddenly chilled with dismay. "The time!" She looked at her watch. It had stopped. "Have you the correct time? I'm to meet a woman at eight o'clock in my hotel lobby."

Colin at once came to life. "It's not quite seven. I say—I'll take you back in the jeep! It's the least I can do after your bringing Mia's message. Are you meeting your friend for dinner?"

"Friend?" Mrs. Pollifax was caught off guard. "Oh no—that is, I'd like to but I don't know her. I mean, I don't know that she'll

have the time for it. I'm only delivering—" She stopped, appalled at her mistakes. She must be more tired than she'd realized.

Colin Ramsey was smiling at her. "You're nervous."

"Well, I shall be very nervous indeed if I'm late," she said, regaining control. "How long will it take us to reach the Itep?"

"The Itep!" he said. "Not the Hilton?"

Mrs. Pollifax suddenly realized why she was drawn to Colin. They had each lived in the shadow of more dazzling personalities so that, somewhat submerged but no less intelligent, they had become acute observers. She recognized from Colin's question—so very akin to what she would have noted—that he was weighing the Itep against what he guessed of her, and the Itep did not fit.

"The Itep, yes," she said firmly.

He looked amused. He arose and rinsed the two glasses under the faucet. "Ever ridden in a jeep before?" he asked as he led her out to the courtyard.

"Never."

"All you have to do is hang on tight." He glanced at her flowered hat and smiled faintly. "It will be an experience for you."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Pollifax, realizing that he believed he was giving her an event in an uneventful life.

"But I still hope you'll dine with me, which is what I was leading up to," he confided. "If you don't mind awfully, I'll wait and see what plans you make with your friend." He added wistfully, "I could show you both something of Istanbul—it's beautiful at night. The Galata Bridge, the moon over the Golden Horn, and Saint Sophia's is unbelievable. We could eat at Pierre Loti's, and—"

She felt the undercurrent of his eagerness: he was lonely. She said gently, "We'll see, shall we?"

"I'll park outside the hotel and wait until quarter past the hour," he said. He helped her into the jeep and they were off.

It was 7:35 when Mrs. Pollifax entered the Itep, leaving Colin to look for a parking space. She went upstairs, removed *Gone with the Wind* from her suitcase and emerged from the room, locking the door behind her. Her mind was now functioning without blurredness; she was suddenly a secret agent. She realized that

she ought to have taken the time earlier to explore the hotel, so she walked upstairs instead of down—the hotel had no elevator—and discovered that the third floor was the top one. She opened a metal door to the roof, looked out upon an expanse of tile, nodded approvingly and chose the narrow back stairs for her descent. The stairs ended in a shabby first-floor landing with three exits: one into the lobby, one to a side street and the last to the basement. Pleased with her tour, Mrs. Pollifax walked into the lobby and sat down, book in hand, at ten minutes before the hour.

It was a very Turkish lobby, furnished with baroque statuary and old leather couches, and its floor glowed with the colors of a fine Turkish rug. Mrs. Pollifax had taken the couch near the back stairs so that she was out of the traffic between the main entrance and the larger staircase, and conspicuously displayed against the lobby's only window, which looked out on the side street. She carefully arranged her book so that it was equally conspicuous. Henry Miles had come in and was seated in a corner, his eyes half closed as if he were dozing. A young couple held hands in another corner, and two men smoked and gossiped along the other wall.

It was when Henry glanced up that Mrs. Pollifax also became alert. It was precisely eight o'clock and a woman had entered. She brought with her a quality that changed the lobby so forcibly that Mrs. Pollifax wondered how people could be unaware of it. The quality was terror, a primitive terror so real that it could almost be touched. The woman hesitated at the entrance, desperately trying not to be noticed as she searched the room. Yet as she stood there, lacking the decisiveness to move, she was accomplishing exactly what she did not want: people were beginning to look at her. And certainly she was out of place in a hotel lobby. Her dress was torn, old and shabby, and she was thin to the point of emaciation. But her face—what a beauty she must have been once, thought Mrs. Pollifax, seeing those haunted dark eyes.

The woman moved across the lobby to Mrs. Pollifax. "Your book," she said in a low voice only lightly accented. "Are you—?"

"Sit down," Mrs. Pollifax said quickly. "You'll be less conspicuous and you do look exhausted." The woman sank down beside her on the couch. "I'm Emily Pollifax. Are you being followed?"

Through the window Mrs. Pollifax saw Colin Ramsey parked in his jeep, patiently waiting for dinner companions. She felt that she had met him in another world, a world of innocence that had abruptly vanished at sight of this poor creature.

"I don't know, but—it is possible," whispered Ferenci-Sabo. "I should never have chosen this place—so far, so public." She looked utterly drained.

Mrs. Pollifax said crisply, "I've brought you money and a passport but obviously you need rest and food before you can use either. There's a rear exit on my left—do you see it? There are also stairs going up to the second floor. My room number is—"

She broke off, startled. The woman had been staring across the lobby in horror. Now she jumped to her feet. "Oh please," she gasped. Mrs. Pollifax looked toward the hotel entrance; when her glance returned to the couch the woman was gone.

Two men in the uniform of the Turkish police were crossing the lobby, and one of them suddenly increased his pace, heading for the rear exit. His companion continued inexorably toward Mrs. Pollifax, and as he loomed above her she doubtfully rose to meet him. "*Pasaport, liften,*" he said, holding out a hand.

"Passport?" said Mrs. Pollifax. "Do you speak English?"

"You are American? English?"

"American." She opened her purse, careful not to touch the second passport.

He scanned it, glancing from face to photograph and back again. "You arrived here this afternoon, I see." He frowned. "Your business in Istanbul?"

"Why—tourist," she faltered.

"The woman to whom you spoke—the one who fled—" He broke off as his comrade entered the lobby through the rear door. His friend shook his head, pointed to the ceiling and disappeared again, presumably to search the hotel. Mrs. Pollifax's inquisitor put her passport in his pocket. "You will come with me, please, to headquarters." His voice was authoritative, as was the hand he placed beneath Mrs. Pollifax's elbow. As they walked out the side door she saw Colin shift gears and drive away, as if he had at last relinquished all hope of dinner companions.

THE MAN BEHIND the desk was in uniform; the second man, seated beyond him and introduced as Mr. Piskopos, was not. As Mrs. Pollifax sat down she practiced exorcising all memory of Carstairs and Alice Dexter White. She was an American tourist, she reminded herself, an American tourist. . . .

"I am an American tourist," she said aloud in reply to a question from the police officer.

Her passport lay open in front of him. He said dryly, "We have suddenly so many tourists in Istanbul. This woman you were speaking to in the Itep . . . you were there to meet her?"

"No," said Mrs. Pollifax calmly. "I was resting in the lobby before dinner when she came up to me and asked for money. I must say she looked as if she needed it."

"In what language did she accost you?"

"English," said Mrs. Pollifax, and suddenly realized the trap that had been set for her.

"English," he repeated politely. "In a Turkish hotel, in the old section of Istanbul where few tourists lodge, a woman beggar comes up to you and speaks in English?"

"She must have guessed I was American."

"Still, if she was only a beggar it is unusual that she could speak your language, is it not?"

Mrs. Pollifax sighed. "If you say so, but why is all this so important? Who is she?"

He handed her a small photograph. "This is the woman to whom you were speaking?" It was both a question and a statement.

The eyes in the snapshot were half closed, but Mrs. Pollifax recognized the haggard, thin face and the faded dress Ferenci-Sabo had been wearing. She realized with astonishment that this picture had been taken since Ferenci-Sabo reached Istanbul on Friday. Had the Turkish government arranged her abduction from the British Consulate? For the first time she realized how important a defecting Communist agent must be to *them*. Russia was Turkey's next-door neighbor, and their guards faced each other for several hundred miles in the east. A great deal of information could be extracted from a knowledgeable Communist defector, and why should the Turks share it with anyone else?

"Well?" demanded the police officer. "Is that the woman?"

"There's a resemblance certainly, but beyond that—she left so suddenly! Who is she?" Mrs. Pollifax inquired again. When he ignored this she said quietly, "I really think I must refuse to answer your questions until I am told precisely why I am here. I had understood Turkey was a country friendly to Americans—"

"To Americans, yes," the man said flatly.

"You don't believe that I'm American? But my passport—"

He looked at her pityingly. "Passports can be forged." He leaned forward. "The woman to whom you were speaking is wanted by the Turkish police. Her friends are of much interest to us—they may be our enemies. You arrived in Istanbul several hours ago, flying here directly from London, and you met this woman. A coincidence? We shall see. In the meantime—while we very thoroughly investigate your identity—we shall keep your passport. We should be able to return it to you by late tomorrow afternoon—if your credentials, how do you call it, check out. You may return now to your hotel, please." He did not shake hands; the other man, Mr. Piskopos, nodded curtly, and Mrs. Pollifax left.

In the police car, Mrs. Pollifax experienced the loneliness of the outcast. She had successfully met Ferenci-Sabo, only to see the woman frightened away; and now she had ignominiously lost her passport for twenty-four hours. What should she do next?

She saw the hotel ahead, its exterior ablaze with neon lights. Just then a taxi passed them and pulled up in front of the Itep to discharge Henry Miles. Mrs. Pollifax wondered what he had made of her visit to police headquarters. His taxi drove away and as the police car headed into the opening another taxi cut in ahead of them; a man leaped from it in a hurry, shoved bills at the driver and turned to run into the hotel. But something arrested him; he stopped, put his hands into his pockets and casually sauntered inside. What he had seen, realized Mrs. Pollifax, was the back of Henry Miles disappearing into the lobby.

He is following Henry! thought Mrs. Pollifax in astonishment. Only a few yards from here that other agent had been killed on Sunday night. I can't let that happen to Henry—there must be some way to warn him, she thought.

She thanked her driver and walked into the hotel. There was no sign of Henry in the empty lobby. To the man at the desk she said, "There is an American staying here; I saw him drop this earlier." She held up her small guidebook to Turkey and smiled. "If you tell me his room number I should like to return it to him."

The desk clerk told her and Mrs. Pollifax walked up the stairs. The door to room 214 stood ajar and the lights were on. She tapped lightly. When there was no reply she swung the door wide and peered inside. "Henry?" she called in a low voice. She recognized his green suitcase on the bed, its contents scattered over the coverlet. Then she saw that every drawer in the room had been opened and Henry's trench coat lay on the floor in shreds. While he had waited patiently for her outside the police station someone must have been searching his room. But where was Henry?

The curtains opening to the balcony trembled slightly, catching Mrs. Pollifax's eye. I'm not supposed to be here, she thought. I'm not even supposed to know Henry, and I mustn't be found here calling out his name. She backed out of the room, touching nothing, and walked down the hall to her own room. Nothing had changed here except that a slip of paper had been inserted under her door. "Henry!" she whispered in relief, and picked it up.

But it was not from Henry; it was a message from the desk clerk. She read: 9:02. *Mr. Remsee gone. You lost pkge in his ownership. He bid you stop before tiring.* She judged the last word was intended to be *retiring*, but what on earth did Colin mean? Lost package! She'd lost nothing today.

Nothing except a defecting counteragent, she thought, and forgetting Henry she hastened down to the street to find a taxi.

3

BY NIGHT Zikzak alley looked sinister; its buildings ghost-haunted. The front of number twenty-three was dark. In the courtyard a bright moon threw jagged shadows over the cobbles and Mrs. Pollifax was relieved to see light showing through the kitchen shutters. She knocked on the door and it was opened at once by

Colin. He beckoned her inside. "I say—I do hope the police didn't give you a hard time!"

"You *saw*!" she flung at him accusingly. "You *knew* I was picked up by the police and you just *left*!"

He was bolting the door behind them. "Of course," he said. "I was afraid you'd head for the jeep and talk to me. In that case the police would have noticed your friend—that woman who was sitting with you by the hotel window. I had her hidden in the back. She was in trouble, wasn't she, running out like that?"

Mrs. Pollifax stared at him. "You mean she was in your jeep when you drove *away*?"

He said patiently, "It's what I've been trying to tell you, yes. She came flying out; I opened the door and said, 'Hop in—I'm Mrs. Pollifax's driver.' She fell in and I dropped a robe over her. A second later the policeman followed and asked me if I'd seen a woman run from the hotel. I told him that no one had run up the street *past* me. So he went the other way."

Mrs. Pollifax stammered, "But then—what did you do with her?"

He looked surprised. "Nothing at all—she's still in the jeep. I couldn't rouse her so I simply locked the garage and left her there. She is your friend, isn't she? I saw you together in the lobby—"

Mrs. Pollifax had sat down very suddenly. Now she began to laugh. As she wiped her eyes and blew her nose she said, "I simply can't thank you enough, Colin."

"Yes, you can—you can tell me what the hell this is all about," he said sternly. "That woman is no tourist. She looks like death itself. She needs blood transfusions at a hospital, not shish kebab at Pierre Loti's. What did the police want of you?"

"My passport," said Mrs. Pollifax sadly.

He looked appalled. "But good heavens, you can't do anything here without a passport—you can't even change hotels! What on earth do the police think you've done?"

Mrs. Pollifax sighed—she was feeling very tired. "They seem to think I came to Istanbul to meet a notorious Communist agent."

His jaw dropped. "They *what*? You?"

"Yes," she said, standing up. "Now I must speak to my friend—and then I'll remove her. I don't want to involve you—"

"Involve me?" Colin said angrily. "I'm already involved. What I'm trying to discover is what I'm involved *in*. You do know you're being followed, don't you? I saw that chap walking up and down the alley this afternoon, and when I left you at your hotel damned if he didn't follow you. For all I know he's outside now."

Mrs. Pollifax brightened. "Oh I do hope so. I tried to find him only half an hour ago at the hotel but I couldn't. That's Henry."

Colin looked taken aback. "Henry," he repeated blankly. "You know him then. Look here, who the devil are you?"

She said sympathetically, "I'm Emily Pollifax, truly I am. I live in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and I'm an American citizen and I have two grown children and three grandchildren. The Turkish police don't believe it but it's absolutely true."

He put his hand to his head. "Oddly enough I believe you. But why did you come to Istanbul then?"

"To meet a notorious Communist agent," she told him cheerfully. "Now do please show me where the jeep is."

"You insist on being facetious," he told her. He removed a key from the shelf over the sink and led her across the courtyard to the office. He unlocked the door and beckoned her inside. "She's in here," he said, opening another door and turning on the lights.

They entered a double garage containing the jeep, some abandoned tires and an orange crate. A shapeless bundle in the rear of the jeep stirred, shedding a sheepskin rug, and Magda Ferencis-Sabo blinked at the sudden light. "Good evening," said Mrs. Pollifax amiably. "It seems that Mr. Ramsey has reunited us!"

Magda's glance moved to Colin. "He is also—?"

Mrs. Pollifax sighed. "No, he is not. Colin, would you mind—"

"Yes," he said crossly.

"You won't allow us a few minutes—?"

"No."

"What a difficult young man," said Magda.

Mrs. Pollifax smiled. "Yes, but he hid you from the police and this is his uncle's garage. Now we must think how to get you out of here. You *are* the woman I was sent to meet, aren't you?"

The woman looked at Colin. "It's better not to mention names, but there was a cable—"

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. "It was shown to me. Can you quote it?"

"I think so," Magda closed her eyes. "It read: 'Arrived at six. Enjoyed eight hours Itep Otel. Wish—'" She opened her eyes. "Perhaps you would complete it so that I too can be sure."

"Of course," said Mrs. Pollifax. "Wish you could join me. Send Red Queen or Black Jack before Friday."

"Look here," said Colin, regarding them uneasily.

"And the identity of Red Queen?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"Red Queen was Agatha Simms. For my benefit—can you identify Black Jack?" asked Magda, and Mrs. Pollifax bent over and whispered the name of Carstairs. Magda nodded. "We understand each other. Now you must help me get to Yozgat, please."

Mrs. Pollifax looked at her blankly. "Who on earth is Yozgat?"

Colin said testily, "It's a Turkish town beyond Ankara."

"But that's out of the question," Mrs. Pollifax said. "I have a passport for you in the name of Alice Dexter White and sufficient funds for you to get to America. You're to leave Turkey at once."

A strangled gasp came from Colin but they paid no attention. Magda said flatly, "I cannot leave this country yet."

"But the police are looking for you," cried Mrs. Pollifax.

"I know, and so are the Russians and the Bulgarians—"

An outright groan issued from Colin.

"—not to mention the people who kidnapped me from the British Consulate and who are far more dangerous than any police. But my life is of no significance at all if I leave without what I brought with me, and I *must* get to Yozgat. What is the trouble?" she asked Colin, turning toward him. "Are you ill?"

He was sitting on the orange crate, staring at them in open-mouthed horror. "My God," he gasped, "I'm harboring a bloody pair of spies!"

"You insisted on listening," Mrs. Pollifax reminded him patiently.

"But she's that woman everybody's looking for! And she's sitting right here in my uncle's garage!"

"Yes, she is," admitted Mrs. Pollifax, "but I'm trying very hard to think of where to take her. You've already been so kind—"

"Kind!" he said in a stricken voice. "Kind! You seemed like such a nice elderly lady!" He stopped, appalled. "I say, I'm terribly

sorry, I didn't mean that. Oh, hang it all," Colin said fiercely to Magda, "do you know of somewhere to go?"

"Yes, to Yozgat. Why do you think they did not kill me?" she demanded of Mrs. Pollifax. "They want what I brought with me; I cross the Bulgarian frontier—do not ask me how—and I know I am followed so I separate myself from what I brought and I go to Istanbul for help. Now I must get to Yozgat, to recover what I bring. Do you understand. . . ?" She stopped. "I hear someone."

"It must be Henry," said Mrs. Pollifax, turning expectantly.

But it was not Henry. Two square-shouldered bulky young men in trench coats stood in the doorway, regarding them with interest. Magda caught her breath sharply. Mrs. Pollifax pulled herself together and said, "And who are you?"

The bulkier of the two men pulled a gun from his pocket.

"Police?" said Colin hopefully, gazing into their stolid faces.

"I don't think so," Mrs. Pollifax told him regretfully.

Magda sighed. "Stefan, I grow tired with you and your friend Otto. For what do you want to follow an old woman like me?"

Stefan grinned. "We do not follow you—it is this one leads us here." He pointed the gun at Mrs. Pollifax. "Who would have guessed the plump American partridge would know the wily Russian fox?" As he spoke his eyes roamed over the garage. He moved to Colin. "You will give the key to the jeep, please," he said. Behind him Otto had also pulled out a gun.

"I say—it's not your jeep," Colin said indignantly. "It's not even mine, and you've absolutely no right—"

"The key," said Stefan, pressing the gun into Colin's stomach. "Otto, open the garage doors, and quickly."

Reluctantly, Colin fumbled in his pocket and brought out a key. "You are wise," said Stefan, taking it. "Stay wise and you will live." Carefully he backed up to the jeep, where Madam Ferenci-Sabo was trying feebly to climb out. With one arm he shoved her down. "Sit! Did you really think we wanted only a jeep?" He slid into the front seat, still watching them. Only when Otto had opened the garage doors did he insert the key into the ignition. Over his shoulder he called, "Don't forget our little souvenir, Otto!" To Mrs. Pollifax he said with a smile, "We do not wish to leave you empty-

handed." From the shadow of the bougainvillea Otto was tugging an inert and heavy bundle.

Mrs. Pollifax heard Colin say, "Good God!" and she watched in horror as Otto dragged a man into the garage and placed him at her feet. Mrs. Pollifax found herself staring into the vacant, unseeing face of Henry Miles. Tears filled her eyes as she saw the small round bullet hole in his shirt. Henry had winked at her in the London air terminal, Henry had valiantly followed her since her arrival and now he was dead.

She looked up as the jeep's engine roared into life; Stefan thrust the gears into reverse and the car catapulted from the garage carrying a white-faced Magda. Otto leaped in beside her and the car neatly turned around and shot up the driveway. "At least the petrol tank's almost empty," Colin said in a choked voice.

Mrs. Pollifax sank down beside Henry. She felt a million years old and deeply shocked. It had all happened so quickly. Minutes earlier the three of them had been talking about Yozgat; now the jeep was gone, Henry lay dead and Magda Ferenci-Sabo had vanished a second time. Mrs. Pollifax looked across the empty garage at Colin. He was standing in the same spot. "It was like a raid," he said, blinking. "They've taken your friend."

"Yes. And killed Henry."

"And stolen my uncle's jeep." His lips thinned. "Damn it, I absolutely loathe being pushed around." He walked to her side and leaned over Henry. "What are you going to do with him?"

The question brought Mrs. Pollifax to her senses. "Why—I don't know," she said. Henry dead could prove an almost insurmountable embarrassment, which was undoubtedly why Stefan had presented him to them.

"We ought to have followed them," Colin said. "There's still the van but now it's too late. If they go far they're bound to empty the tank; there was less than five miles' worth left. We can't keep Henry here," he added.

"No, we can't," said Mrs. Pollifax. "But I believe I know what to do with him. I can take him to Dr. Belleaux."

"Who?"

"I was given the name of a man to contact in an emergency."

"But with a *body*?"

"I daresay it's unorthodox," Mrs. Pollifax admitted, "but if he's equipped to handle emergencies can you think of a graver one than being presented with the body of a man who's been murdered? I have Dr. Belleaux's address right here in my purse—"

"Do you mean Dr. Guillaume Belleaux?" said Colin in surprise.

"Yes, do you know him?"

"I've heard of him. Everyone has."

"Well, don't you see, he can vouch for me to the Turkish police! We can't tell the police about Magda, but there's your jeep—that's traceable—and I can certainly describe the two men who stole it. With this information the police may very well find both the jeep and the men by morning, and I shall have a clue as to where Magda may be!"

"Let's go then," Colin said. "The van's in the other garage. I'll back it up and we can put—uh—Henry inside." He disappeared through a door and then a cumbersome van backed into the courtyard. "I think I'll turn the lights out for this," Colin said nervously and pulled the switch, leaving moonlight their only illumination. "You take his feet, will you? I'll take his shoulders." Clumsily, slowly, they carried Henry to the van and inserted him into it. This was difficult because the rear doors had been welded shut to provide more space inside, and Henry had to be lifted up to the high cab of the van. Not wanting to spend time lifting him over the seats, they were forced to let him remain sprawled between the seats in a rather drunken pose.

"I hope Henry doesn't mind," Mrs. Pollifax said breathlessly. "I mean his spirit, or whatever lingers behind."

"I suppose he's a spy, too," Colin said.

"Probably," said Mrs. Pollifax with a sigh, "although he was here only to look after me."

THE van moved ponderously up the driveway and turned down Zikzak alley. "You have Dr. Belleaux's address?" asked Colin.

She found it among the papers in her purse and handed it to him. "The bottom one is the home address," she pointed out.

He held it under the dashboard light. "That's in the Taksim

area. At this hour it won't take long. I know that street—very posh."

They lapsed into silence. Doubtless Colin was thinking of his uncle's jeep—another disaster for him, Mrs. Pollifax mused—while she tried not to think of what might be happening to Magda, or what had already happened to Henry. It must have been his murder that she had interrupted when she entered his room to warn him. She recalled the curtains fluttering at the balcony window and shivered: his body must have lain behind those curtains. It was obvious now that Stefan had also hidden there, and had heard her call to Henry—and then she had led the murderers straight to Magda. I should never have gone to Henry's room, she thought sadly. Mr. Carstairs warned me—no, ordered me—to have no contact with him. How could I have forgotten? One softhearted moment and I not only betray Magda but show her enemies that Mrs. Emily Pollifax is not what she appears to be.

The van had negotiated dark streets and was now passing over the Galata Bridge, which even at midnight was filled with trucks and donkeys bearing merchandise to the markets and bazaars. The lights of tugboats slashed the inky water, and pale moonlight etched the silhouette of the mosque at the foot of the bridge. Mrs. Pollifax sighed and forced herself back to the moment. "How is it that you've heard of Dr. Belleaux?" she asked Colin.

"To live in Istanbul is to hear of him," he said. "The police consult him on crimes—he writes and lectures about criminology—and the archaeologists consult him on bones, that sort of thing. He's quite lionized. Goes to all the 'in' parties."

"What does he look like?"

"My impression is that he's late fiftyish or early sixtyish, with a pointed white goatee. Rather thin, talkative, elegant— Ah, here's the street. I told you it was an impressive one."

The well-spaced villas were dark, except for one in the center of the block that blazed with light. It was at this house that Colin applied the brakes. "You're in luck," he said. "Dr. Belleaux is not only up but from the look of all these cars he's giving a party as well." He maneuvered the van along the line of cars on the street and stopped near the entrance, cutting the ignition and lights. "What do you plan to do?" he said.

"I'd not expected a party," Mrs. Pollifax said. "I think I shall tell them at the door I'm from the American Consulate. That will do until I can get Dr. Belleaux alone. Would you care to come, too?" She was growing rather attached to Colin, she realized.

"I don't feel I should leave Henry, do you? If anyone walked past and happened to glance in—" His voice trailed off as a car rattled up the avenue, sputtering and backfiring, to turn into Dr. Belleaux's driveway. At the crest of the drive the car shuddered to a halt, a man jumped from the rear seat and gave it a push and then leaped in as the car—it was a jeep—coasted down toward the house.

Mrs. Pollifax drew in her breath sharply. "Colin—"

"I saw it," he said in a stunned voice. "I told you the tank was almost empty. Damn it, that was my jeep!"

"But here?" whispered Mrs. Pollifax. "*Here?*"

"It was Otto—I swear—who gave it a push," he said. "And that must have been your friend slumped in the back. Are you coming?" he demanded, and jumped to the pavement.

"I certainly am," she said fervently. She could not imagine what kind of mix-up she had stumbled into. Stefan and Otto simply *couldn't* be working for Carstairs, too; not when they had killed Henry. But why were they *here?*

"Just a minute," said Colin, and reentered the van to emerge with two lethal-looking guns. "Don't expect them to fire; they're made of wood," he whispered. "They're props Uncle Hu made for a short subject on Atatürk."

Props in hand, they hurried down the driveway, moving in shadow until they came to the rear of the house. The jeep had been abandoned outside the back door, which stood wide open, the screen door still swinging gently. But although a great deal of light and noise came from inside, there was no one to be seen.

"Damn," said Colin. He looked intently at Mrs. Pollifax. "You're not going to knock and ask for Dr. Belleaux?"

"No. But I'm going to risk a look inside."

He looked shaken. "I say, that's rather dangerous."

She said steadily, "As you may have guessed, I came to Istanbul only to help Magda—and she's in there, and I'm responsible."

He nodded. "Then I'm going in with you."

"Colin, I can't let you become any more involved. I may get caught, and you've said yourself that you're a physical coward."

He said fiercely, "Of course I'm a coward, but these men stole my uncle's jeep, dumped a dead man in our garage and kidnapped your friend. Now do let's stop talking—I'm going with you!"

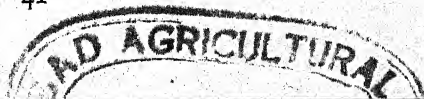
Mrs. Pollifax smiled faintly. "All right." She tiptoed to the screen door and slipped inside with Colin directly behind her. Facing them, a back staircase rose steeply, and to their right lay a long kitchen, brightly lit but empty of people. Mrs. Pollifax chose the staircase; halfway up it, she paused. The murmur of voices from the party rose and fell in waves. For a moment she felt trapped. Then she rallied, gripped her absurd wooden pistol and moved on up the stairs.

At the top, a wide carpeted hallway ran in both directions. To the right it terminated in a stairwell, the carpet overflowing the stairs like a waterfall of gold; it was from there that music and conversation rose almost deafeningly. Mrs. Pollifax headed in the opposite direction. She opened the nearest door and she and Colin found themselves looking into a bedroom, empty except for some ornate hangings and baroque furniture. The second door proved to be a linen closet. With some impatience Mrs. Pollifax threw back a third door, only to be reminded that impatience bred carelessness, for this door opened on a bedroom containing three people. The impact took her breath away—and just as stunned, the three people turned to stare at her.

Magda was lying on a chaise longue and Stefan was in the act of withdrawing a hypodermic needle from her arm. Otto stood on guard a few feet from Mrs. Pollifax. He was the first to react: he moved so menacingly that without a second to think about it Mrs. Pollifax lifted her right hand, flattened it as Lorraine had taught her and dealt Otto a crisp karate chop to the side of his throat. He stared at her in astonishment, then his eyes closed and he sank slowly to the floor. Behind her Colin gasped, "*Mrs. Pollifax!*"

"Get his gun," said Mrs. Pollifax crisply.

Colin stooped and plucked it from the floor, pocketing his wooden prop. "Against the wall," he ordered Stefan, waving the gun with growing enthusiasm.



Mrs. Pollifax, her flowered hat only a little askew, went at once to Magda, who was trying to stand. "Can you walk?"

"I'm drugged," she said in an anguished voice. "Hurry!"

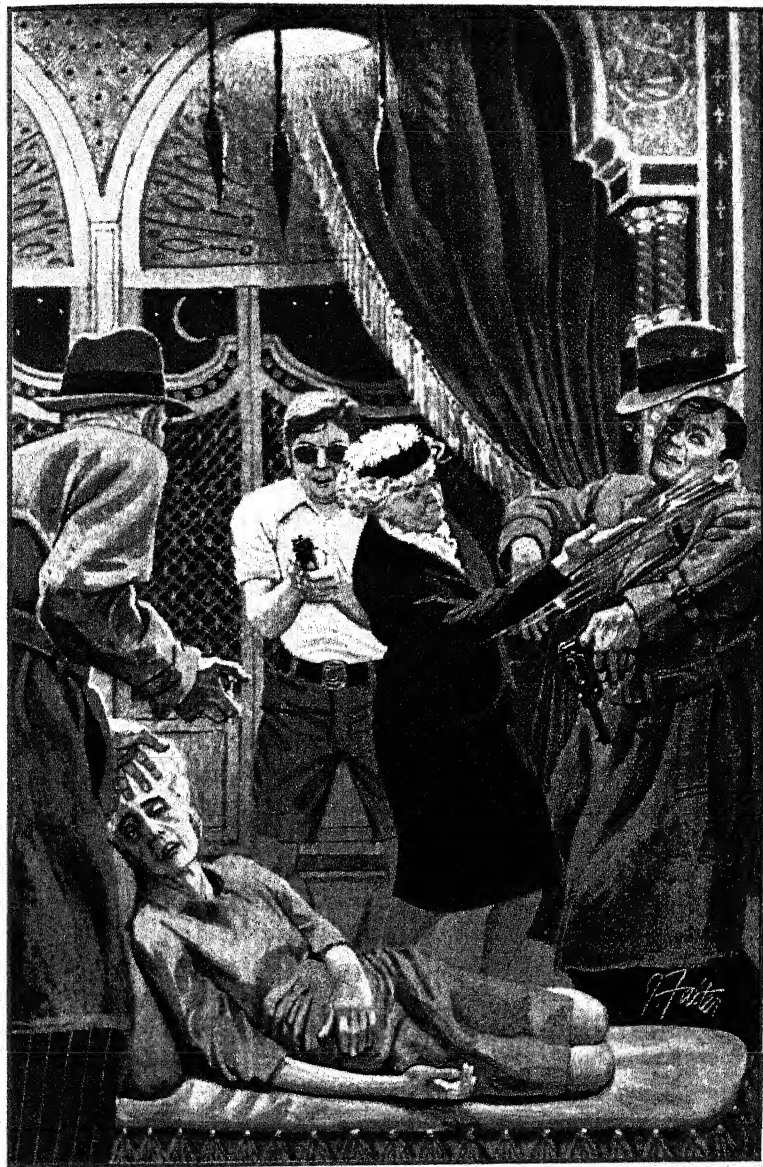
Mrs. Pollifax grasped her arm and led her to the door. Colin followed, walking backward with his gun pointed at Stefan. But Stefan refused to remain against the wall: he took one step and then another, following Colin with a nasty grin on his face.

"There's no lock on this door!" Colin said desperately, trying to slam it in Stefan's face. Mrs. Pollifax glanced back over her shoulder. Magda had already begun to sag and it was doubtful that she would remain upright if Mrs. Pollifax withdrew her arm to help Colin. Stefan was determined to follow them; he was not going to make it easy for Colin, who was so patently an amateur. "If he comes too close, shoot him," she said calmly, and headed back down the hall to the stairs.

But at the top of the rear staircase Mrs. Pollifax stopped in dismay, for the hall below was now aswarm with workers. The screen door was propped wide open. Buckets of ice were being carried in and empty trays wheeled out. A heavysset butler stood at the bottom of the stairs, completely blocking the exit.

There was no alternative but to use the main staircase. Holding up Magda, Mrs. Pollifax half carried her to the stairwell, grasped the banister and began a step-by-step descent. They made a ludicrous procession, she thought, herself and Magda clinging together in the vanguard, followed by Colin walking backward and brandishing a pistol at the leering Stefan, who followed several paces behind. As they descended Mrs. Pollifax looked down to the massive oak door at the foot of the stairs. Beyond, parked in the street, stood Colin's van; if they could just get through that door before Magda lost consciousness . . .

The piano playing came to a halt. The murmur of voices subsided into startled silence, and Mrs. Pollifax found herself staring into dozens of gaping faces. She supposed that two women on the stairs might have gone unnoticed, but the sight of Colin holding a gun made for a certain conspicuousness. Rather wearily—it had been a long and violent evening—Mrs. Pollifax lifted her wooden gun and addressed the sea of faces below her. "I will shoot the first



person who tries to stop us." It was a phrase culled from the late, late movies but it was the best she could manage.

Someone said, "Get Dr. Belleaux!"

Mrs. Pollifax reached the bottom of the stairs and pulled open the door, holding it wide. As Colin backed into her, stepping painfully on her ankle, she said softly, "Take Magda and run."

He nodded and pressed the functioning gun into her hand. "Thanks—I couldn't possibly shoot it," he admitted.

"I can," she said calmly. "Just get her out, she's going under." Colin bore the sagging Magda into the night, and Mrs. Pollifax faced Stefan. "I will shoot the first person who walks through this door after I leave," she called out, only a little embarrassed by her clichés. To her left, she saw several people move apart, and for just one moment she looked into the eyes of the party's host. She thought, Dr. Belleaux, I presume, and then her glance swerved back to Stefan, coiled to jump at her, and she fired the gun at the ceiling above him. Slamming the door behind her, she ran.

When Mrs. Pollifax reached the van Colin was starting up the engine with a dead Henry at his elbow and an unconscious Magda in the passenger seat. "Jump in somewhere—anywhere," he cried.

Mrs. Pollifax climbed in and fell across Magda just as the van began to race down the street. "I'm heading for the ferry. I'm going to get you out of Istanbul right now, before all hell breaks loose," Colin said. "You can't go back to your hotel, and the first place Stefan will look for you is Ramsey Enterprises; after that they'll begin watching the ferries and the airport. There's not a minute to lose."

"I'm a wanted person," Mrs. Pollifax said wonderingly.

Colin grinned. "Well, look at the facts. The police have your passport and will be searching for you; Stefan and Otto will be looking for you; you'll be wanted for burglary—not to mention kidnapping—and have you noticed the interesting passengers we've acquired? I can't think how to explain a murdered man, or a woman who's been heavily drugged. I say," he added, "shouldn't you do something about Henry before we reach the ferry?"

Mrs. Pollifax agreed, and as they careened through the empty streets she pulled Henry back into the darkest shadows of the van.

AT THE Kabatas landing stage they encountered their first stroke of luck: a ferry was being readied to leave its slip. With a flourish Colin drove the van onto the ferry; only one more car followed and the gates swung shut. "But there are telephones," pointed out Mrs. Pollifax bleakly.

"There are telephones, yes. Keep your fingers crossed that no one will be waiting for us on the other side!"

As they crossed the Bosphorus they took a flashlight and did a frenzied housecleaning of the van's rear, which had been casually equipped for living purposes. Under Colin's tutelage they set up an army cot and chained it to the wall, placed the heavily drugged Magda on it and covered her with a blanket. They rolled Henry under the built-in workbench which Colin explained was used for developing photographs and cooking meals on a sterno.

"Do you think Dr. Belleaux's guests saw the van clearly enough to describe it?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"From the window they could have seen only the shape of it in the dark," Colin said. "But all anyone need do is inquire what vehicles belong to Ramsey Enterprises to learn the registry number and description. There's the jeep, the other van that Uncle Hu's taken to Erzurum, and this. Do you think Stefan overheard Magda insisting on going to Yozgat?"

"Probably," said Mrs. Pollifax. She sighed. "I don't *like* this Yozgat business. My orders were to get Magda out of Turkey quickly—and it would still be relatively simple to put her on a plane, whereas Yozgat . . . I don't even know where it is!"

"I don't mind dropping you off there," Colin said. "I can't go back to Istanbul until this blows over and I've decided to keep going and find Uncle Hu. He's the only one who can untangle all this, and he should be starting back from Erzurum tomorrow."

"Colin . . ."

He smiled. "I know, you hate to see me involved. It's purest chivalry, of course—I was raised on King Arthur. But how can I possibly drop all this now? Tonight—for the first time in my life—

I've been involved in something I actually pulled off successfully. It's positively dazzling. Your friend Magda seems to attract the most unwholesome bunch of toughs I've ever seen, and I can't say very much for your other friend, Dr. Belleaux."

"I can't either, and I think that Mr. Carstairs would be extremely surprised by what we've seen tonight, too."

"Who's Mr. Carstairs?"

"The gentleman in Washington who—uh—arranged my trip."

Colin said with a crooked smile, "To have sent you he must have a real sense of humor. There's the warning bell—come along to the front of the van, we're almost there."

The ferry nudged into the slip, chains rattled, gates opened and engines warmed up. The cars ahead began to move, and Colin inched the van forward. Slowly they drove off the ferry and into the night; no police whistles shrilled, no one shouted at them to halt. They had crossed the Bosphorus and left Istanbul behind without incident. "Now where are we?" inquired Mrs. Pollifax.

"This is Üsküdar," said Colin. "Formerly Chrysopolis, noted mainly for its enormous cemetery."

"Cemetery!" exclaimed Mrs. Pollifax thoughtfully.

Colin looked at her. "You can't possibly—"

"But we must find somewhere appropriate to leave Henry."

He groaned. "You look so extremely respectable."

"I have a flexible mind—I believe it's one of the advantages of growing old," she explained. "I find youth quite rigid at times. Why *not* a cemetery?"

Colin sighed. "I daresay there's a certain logic there." He peered out at a sign. "I think we're driving alongside the cemetery now. Watch for an entrance, will you?"

Several moments later they left the world of trams, lights and occasional automobiles and entered a subterranean night world of awesome silence. The van bumped to a jarring halt and Colin cut the motor. At once the quiet was filled with an overwhelming sound of chirping grasshoppers and shrilling cicadas. "It's a huge cypress grove," Colin explained. The headlights picked out tangles of dark undergrowth and headstones leaning in every direction.

"What curious headstones!" said Mrs. Pollifax.

"They're Moslem, of course. The steles with knobs on the top represent women, the ones with turbans are men. Then there are variations, for priests and those who've gone to Mecca. There's even a sultan buried in the old part." He flicked off the headlights.

"I suppose you had to turn off the lights?" said Mrs. Pollifax as an owl hooted mournfully.

"I don't think we're supposed to be here," Colin pointed out.

Laboriously, they carried Henry from the van and lifted him down to the damp grass. "Where do you want him?" asked Colin.

Mrs. Pollifax ignored the irony in his voice. "Over by that larger stone, I think. We want him to be noticed reasonably soon. Do you think those horrid men stole his identification?"

"Probably," gasped Colin as they carried Henry across a path and up a small slope. They put him down by the headstone that had caught Mrs. Pollifax's eye. "Don't show a light!" Colin said.

"I'm writing his name on a slip of paper. There!" she said, switching off the flashlight and handing it to Colin. "'Henry Miles, care of Oteli Itep.'" She tucked it into the pocket of Henry's jacket. "I should like someone to do as much for me," she said firmly. She stood a moment, looking into the eerie black shapes and mooncast shadows. "He was a very nice man," she said at last. "Now, do let's leave."

"What did you do—roll 'im?" said a deep, amused voice.

Mrs. Pollifax saw a shadow detach itself from the darkness, and a giant of a man strolled nonchalantly toward them. When Colin turned on the flashlight, the man shrank to a reasonable six feet. His face was swarthy, with a stubble of beard. He wore filthy sailors' pants, a jacket that had once been white, a frayed turtle-neck sweater and a pair of old sneakers with holes in the toes.

Colin said bravely, "Who the devil are you, and what are you doing behind that headstone?"

"Sleeping," said the man, "till you woke me up." He put his hands on his hips and surveyed Mrs. Pollifax, his eyes lingering on her face, moving to the flowered hat and taking in the navy blue suit. "Now I seen everything!" He dropped to the ground and peered at Henry. "He's dead," he said. "You shoot him?"

"No. Someone else did," Colin said crossly.

"We didn't know what else to do with him," explained Mrs. Pollifax. "Since we just happened to be passing by— Why are you here?" she asked sternly.

"That's my business." He stood up again. "A couple of tourists dropping off a guy with a bullet hole in his chest!" He shook his head. "Maybe the police would like to hear about that."

Mrs. Pollifax stiffened. "Nonsense. I very much doubt that you can afford to talk to the police."

He guffawed. "You got a suspicious mind. Okay, I am sleeping in a graveyard. I am broke. So you got a corpse; it makes us even. You also got a truck and I need to get out of here. I had it in mind we might make a deal." His voice caressed the last word. "What the hell, I'll take a lift if you're going in the right direction."

"Which direction is that?" asked Colin cautiously.

Cunningly the man replied, "Which direction you heading?"

"How *do* we proceed?" Mrs. Pollifax asked Colin.

"Toward Ankara."

"Perfect!" said their new companion, beaming at them. "Got a friend there that owes me money."

"What's your name?" Colin demanded.

"Sandor's enough. Just Sandor."

"Greek?"

"Of a sort."

"A sailor?"

"Of a sort."

"Can you drive?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"I can drive."

Mrs. Pollifax exchanged glances with Colin. "An unholy alliance," he commented.

"Sheerest blackmail," said Mrs. Pollifax cheerfully.

"But mutual," Colin pointed out. "All right, Sandor, we'll give you a lift."

"Of course," he said. "But no monkey business—no stops. I don't want no welcoming committees in Ankara."

"That—uh—fits our plans quite well," Mrs. Pollifax conceded.

As they walked back to the van Colin said in a low voice, "Of course you realize he's wanted by the police."

"Then he's in good company," Mrs. Pollifax said. "What would you guess his crime to be?"

"Smuggling's big along the coast, and if he's a sailor he's probably been involved in it."

"Smuggling," repeated Mrs. Pollifax, and smiled. "So now we have joined the underworld! How very surprising life can be!"

THEY drove along the road to Izmit, nibbling at some grapes with which Sandor had equipped himself for his night in the graveyard. Following his initial shock at discovering their other passenger—"She dead, too?" he had asked—Sandor announced that he was going to sleep before he did any driving. "But I'll know if you stop," he said, drawing a gun from a pocket. "Any tricks and I shoot." Whereupon he lay down on the van floor, curled up and began snoring.

The moon that had haunted them earlier now perversely disappeared, and to depress Mrs. Pollifax further, the road was bumpy. For a while the Bay of Kadiköy cheered her with its cluster of lights, and later there were glimpses of the Sea of Marmora, but soon a light rain began to fall, blurring all hope of sight-seeing.

Mrs. Pollifax had neither slept nor eaten anything of substance since her arrival in Istanbul and she was beginning to feel the lack of both. She was also feeling the irregularity of her situation: having never received so much as a parking ticket she was under suspicion by the police in this supposedly friendly country, and might even become the subject of a nationwide alarm. There was no one now to whom she could appeal—certainly not Dr. Belleaux—and her companions in exile were a disreputable blackmailer and a young British misfit. She turned to scrutinize Colin beside her. But for him, Magda would have disappeared forever. Misfit or not, she had to regard Colin as a small miracle.

At a town called Maltepe the road met the sea again and followed it on to the port of Kartal. To keep Colin awake Mrs. Pollifax read the road directions from her guidebook. They argued whether, once past Izmit, they should drive to Ankara by way of Bolu or Beypazari. "Which route do people prefer?" she asked.

"Bolu. The road's excellent."

"Then I think we should go by way of Beypazari."

They were still discussing it when they reached Izmit at half past three in the morning. Seeing the brightening horizon in the east, Colin nodded. "All right, Beypazari. The thought of getting to Ankara quickly is very tempting—after all, it's two hundred ninety-two miles and we've gone only sixty—but if dawn's coming, and the police will be looking for the van, then we might not get there at all if we go by Bolu. By the way, what exactly do you expect to happen there—being an experienced undercover agent?" he added dryly.

"I am not an undercover agent," said Mrs. Pollifax tartly. "I'm a courier. As to what I expect I would say just about anything, but that's because of Dr. Belleaux, you see."

Colin said wryly, "You've not yet found a rational explanation for Magda's being carried off to his house?"

"No, I haven't," she said, "and the really frightening part of it all is that he's a man whom everyone trusts, including the police and the Turkish and American governments."

"Which leaves us the only two people who think otherwise? Damn it, that's a horrible thought!"

"Yes, it is." Mrs. Pollifax shivered. "There's no way to fight him—just think of the possibilities open to him!"

"It's better you don't," Colin said gently.

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. He was quite right: they would be rendered helpless, like the tiger in a tiger hunt, with the police and Dr. Belleaux—separately or even together—beating the bushes in a steadily diminishing circle until they were flushed out. "At least I have Magda," she said, but then she realized she did not have the slightest idea of how to get Magda safely out of the country.

"Could you cable your friend in Washington?" Colin asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I was given strict orders not to." She resumed staring out of the window.

Beyond Izmit the road dipped down to Geyve and then wound up again through fields of wheat and tobacco. Dawn found them on a high plateau; then they reached a pass and coasted down into a plain. Colin suddenly pulled the van off the road. "We've gone nearly a hundred and sixty miles and I'm tired," he said. "Sandor

can pay his way now. Sandor," he called. "It's half past seven and your turn to drive."

"Wotthehell," said Sandor, yawning noisily. "This lady back here is staring at me," he complained. "Is there breakfast?"

"There's a camp stove," said Colin, "and the water container is full. And I believe there are bouillon cubes, dusty but soluble."

"But that's wonderful," said Mrs. Pollifax. She crawled back to Magda, who was staring at the roof of the van with a puzzled expression. Seeing Mrs. Pollifax she said in a weak voice, "Where am I now? And who was that man who snores so dreadfully?"

"It's a little difficult to explain. How are you feeling?"

"Weak and very thirsty. I have been drugged again?"

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. "It might be wise for you to get some fresh air now. It's very hot back here. Colin is making broth."

"Colin! So that funny young man is still here."

"The situation is extremely fluid," Mrs. Pollifax said, "but we *are* moving in the direction of Yozgat." She helped Magda to her feet and out to the roadside, where Colin had set up his sterno.

Colin was saying, "Presently we'll be crossing the Anatolian plain and there will be even more sun, wind and dust." The water he was nursing came to a boil, he stirred bouillon into it and divided it among four battered tin mugs. "Here you are," he said.

At first Mrs. Pollifax rolled the broth on her tongue, savoring its wetness; then she drank it greedily. "Purest nectar," she said, and saw that color was coming back into Magda's white face. "At what hour do you think we will reach Ankara?" she asked.

Sandor was smacking his lips. "With me driving we go like the wind. Another forty miles to Beypazari, beyond that sixty maybe. By early afternoon we get there. Then we go by back roads. They are very bad," he added regretfully, "but very private."

"You are wanted by the police?" inquired Mrs. Pollifax.

Sandor grinned. "You are a nice lady but you ask too many questions. In Ankara I have fine friends and I let you go free."

"Free?" said Mrs. Pollifax. "I didn't realize we'd been captured."

He patted his pocket with meaning. "I have you under guard; beware. Now wotthehell, let's go."

As she and Sandor talked, Mrs. Pollifax had been aware of a

small Piper Cub drifting lazily along the horizon. Now with one foot on the step of the van she said with alarm, "Colin, look!" For the plane, having momentarily disappeared behind a ridge ahead of them, had suddenly reappeared and was flying toward them at a shockingly low altitude. Colin, who was behind her carrying the camp stove, squinted at the sky. Mrs. Pollifax wondered if they were going to be strafed; and then just as abruptly the plane climbed, and circled away toward Ankara.

"Damn fool," Sandor shouted, shaking a fist at the horizon.

Colin said in a choked voice, "What the devil does that mean?"

"Reconnaissance, I think," said Mrs. Pollifax. "But by whom?" Putting aside her anxiety she helped Magda back to her cot and insisted that Colin have the dubious honor of napping on the floor because he was the more tired from driving. Again she took the passenger seat, this time beside Sandor, and clung to it as they set off. Sandor drove with abandon, swerving gaily around holes, swearing in Turkish and English and frequently taking both hands off the wheel to rub dust from his eyes.

They climbed now to a ravined and dusty plateau. It was hot, the van captured both the heat and the dust, and their water supply was gone. They had passed only one car, and it had been abandoned beside the road. Nothing moved except the mountains on the horizon, which swam in the rising heat like mirages, until far ahead of them Mrs. Pollifax saw an approaching cloud of dust. "Dust storm?" she inquired of Sandor.

"Car," he said briefly.

Mrs. Pollifax nodded; and as it drew nearer she saw that it was indeed a car, a very old Packard touring car of 1920 vintage. The sun shone across its windshield, turning it opaque. As the car approached, an arm was extended from the passenger side. "Watch out—a gun!" Mrs. Pollifax cried, and ducked her head just as the windshield in front of her splintered.

Sandor virtually stood on the brakes. "Wotthehell," he shouted, fighting the steering wheel to get them off the road.

Behind her Colin yelled, "Stay down, Mrs. Pollifax!"

Metal protested and tires squealed as the van lurched across the uneven ground. Sandor was tugging at his belt with one hand;

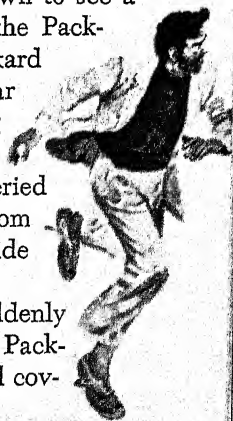
he brought out his gun but the car had passed them. A second bullet rang *ping!* against the rear of the van. Mrs. Pollifax turned in alarm and saw that Colin was reacting with astonishing efficiency; he had remembered that he had Stefan's gun, and now he was slashing at the glass porthole in the back. She watched him push the gun through the opening. Beside her Sandor was fighting the wheel again, turning the van back toward the road.

"Look out!" screamed Mrs. Pollifax, for the ancient Packard had also turned and was accelerating toward them as if hoping to ram them. For a second the van's wheels spun uselessly in a gully, then Sandor roared the engine and they shot back onto the road just as the Packard left it. A bullet zoomed over Sandor's head, again just missing Mrs. Pollifax, and went out the open window. But Sandor had fired, too. He seemed to have three hands: one for the gearshift, one for the wheel and one for the gun. With a wrench of the wheel he turned and backed the van and tried to shoot at the car but the Packard swerved, circled and returned to the road to face them head on.

For several seconds the cars faced each other at a distance of perhaps twenty yards, each driver revving his engine and waiting. Then the Packard roared toward them at full speed.

"Hoooooweeeeee," shouted Sandor, his eyes shining, and he recklessly steered straight for the Packard, not giving an inch. Mrs. Pollifax screamed and braced herself. She looked down to see a familiar face—Otto's—almost at their window, saw the Packard hurtle past, barely missing them. As the Packard passed from sight she heard Colin firing from the rear window and heard the scream of tires, a terrifying sound of metal twisting and turning. Mrs. Pollifax put her hands to her face. "They've turned over," cried Sandor, braking. He leaped out. Mrs. Pollifax slid from the van and ran toward the Packard which lay upside down in the dust.

"We must help them," she cried, and then suddenly there was a great explosion, and flames turned the Packard into a funeral pyre. Mrs. Pollifax stepped back and covered her eyes. "Did anyone get out?" she gasped.



Colin was beside her with a hand on her shoulder. He looked pale and shaken. "No," he said. "I watched. Otto was driving, and a man I'd never seen before was doing the shooting."

Sandor said belligerently, "What goes on here; they maniacs? They tried to kill us! What the hell they want?"

"Us," Mrs. Pollifax told him in a trembling voice.

He gaped at her. "Those jerks were gunning for *you*?" he asked, suddenly lapsing into underworld slang.

Mrs. Pollifax nodded wearily. "Yes. They must have had radio communication with that plane, and—" She hesitated, then recklessly took the plunge. "You may as well know, Sandor, that not only *those* men are after us but the police, too."

"Police!" He stared blankly. "You?"

"Yes."

His mouth dropped. "So you *did* shoot the guy you unloaded in the cemetery!"

"No," she said, "but Otto did—the man driving the Packard."

Comprehension dawned in Sandor's eyes. "I'll be damned," he said, and to Mrs. Pollifax's surprise he gave her a look of grudging admiration. "I'll be damned," he said again, scratching his head, and then he began to laugh. "You're crooks, too!"

Colin said primly, "I say, I resent that!"

"No offense, I know we're not in the same league." Sandor grinned. "And you had a gun all the time. So when I picked you up back there—you was really picking me up! I thought I had you two scared to death of me."

Mrs. Pollifax said soberly, "I think we should leave before someone sees the smoke and comes to find out what's happened. Colin, do go back and reassure Magda." But she remained staring at the smoldering wreckage. "They intended it to be us," she said with a shudder. "Sandor, you did a remarkable job of driving."

He was regarding her now with a look of infinite respect. "You want to make some real money? I know a guy in Ankara could use you. I'll introduce you when we get there."

"I'm not sure that we should head for Ankara now," said Mrs. Pollifax. "There may be roadblocks. And thank you but I don't need any 'real money'; I just want to get safely out of Turkey."

Sandor nodded wisely. "That's bad then," he said, escorting her back to the van. After handing her up he appeared to have reached a decision. "You come to Ankara," he said firmly. "I got good friends there. A little crooked"—he shrugged and grinned—"but wotthehell, you need help."

5

IN LANGLEY, Virginia, it was half past eight on Tuesday morning. Carstairs had arrived in his air-conditioned office in the CIA building and was sipping his second cup of coffee when his secretary entered. "Yes, Bishop, what is it?"

Bishop held out a sheet of paper. "A routine report from the State Department. It seems that during the night they received an urgent request from Istanbul for the verification of one Mrs. Emily Pollifax, an alleged American traveling with an allegedly American passport."

It was, as Bishop had said, a routine report, a circulating copy of a memo that already had been filed in the Passport Division of the State Department. Its message was innocent enough, but reading it Carstairs experienced his first uneasiness. "I don't like it," he said. "I don't like it at all."

"No, sir."

"I see it was received here at five fifteen a.m. That would have been nine fifteen last night, in Istanbul." He swore. "A little more than an hour following Mrs. Pollifax's first attempt to meet Ferenci-Sabo." Of all the people moving in and out of Istanbul, what on earth could have drawn the attention of the police to Mrs. Pollifax? Her passport had been arranged on a top-priority basis. Had something important been omitted in the processing? No, that was impossible; he had double-checked it himself.

"It does not induce calm," he said dryly, "when police single out one person out of thousands—and that person happens to be our agent." He shook his head. "We can't do anything directly, Bishop, but we can be devious. Contact Barnes over in the State Department. Ask him to cable our consulate in Istanbul, in his name, to

ask why the hell the Turkish police challenged the legal passport of an American citizen. If the police have gone so far as to question Mrs. Pollifax the consulate ought to know about it. If they don't know, they can darned well find out. *I'm* certainly curious."

The reply, when it came in from the American Consulate, was brief. The Istanbul police had questioned Mrs. Emily Pollifax the preceding evening but they refused to say why. They had retained her passport for twenty-four hours; having received verification of her identity they were now prepared to return it to her, but they had not been able to locate her. She was registered at the Hotel Itep but had not been seen there since late Monday evening.

"Not been seen!" Carstairs swore, briefly but savagely. "Thank God she's got Henry with her, but where the hell can she go without a passport? Damn it, I can't find out one blessed thing without endangering Ferenci-Sabo as well as Mrs. Pollifax."

"There's Dr. Belleaux, sir."

He shook his head. "Not yet. I wanted absolute secrecy on Mrs. Pollifax—and now I'm stuck with it. I'd contact Henry before I risked anyone else—Bishop, someone's at the door."

"Yes, sir." Bishop opened it and returned bearing an interservice message. "From Barnes, sir, in the State Department. He's had another cable from the American Consulate in Istanbul. REGRET INFORM YOU BODY OF AMERICAN CITIZEN HENRY MILES—"

"*Body?*" echoed Carstairs in a stricken voice.

"Yes, sir. —HENRY MILES DISCOVERED EARLY THIS MORNING IN USKUDAR CEMETERY. ONLY CLUE HANDWRITTEN NOTE APPENDED TO BODY QUOTE HENRY MILES CARE OF OTELI ITEP UNQUOTE. POLICE HAVE IDENTIFIED HANDWRITING AS BELONGING TO—" Bishop suddenly stopped and swallowed hard.

"They've got a lead?" growled Carstairs. "Get on with it, Bishop, for heaven's sake!"

"—TO MRS. EMILY POLLIFAX AMERICAN CITIZEN OF NEW BRUNSWICK NEW JERSEY AND REGISTERED AT SAME HOTEL."

"Oh, no," groaned Carstairs.

"Yes, sir. There's one more sentence. WARRANT ISSUED FOR HER ARREST."

"Good God," said Carstairs, and slumped back into his chair.

"Henry dead, Mrs. Pollifax missing and not a word on Ferenci-Sabo. We'd better keep that lobby covered every evening until Friday—just in case. Is Hawkins still in London?"

Bishop nodded.

Carstairs sighed. "It's like dropping people into a bottomless well to send them to Istanbul, but we must keep trying. Put through a call to London, will you, Bishop? I'll give Hawkins the most superficial of briefings, and if Ferenci-Sabo is still alive he'll have to hide her somewhere until we can think what to do next."

"And Mrs. Pollifax, sir?"

Carstairs nodded. "I was coming to that. Send a cable to Dr. Belleaux, Bishop. Alert him to the fact that Mrs. Emily Pollifax is one of our people and may try to reach him, in which case we'd appreciate his giving her what help he can. Add a full description of her—and don't forget that damned flowered hat!"

CAREFULLY Sandor inched the van through streets so narrow the houses could be touched on either side. Frequently their passage was halted by an ambling donkey, or by women carrying jugs of water on their heads. It was three o'clock in the afternoon and sun and dust lay heavy in the alleys, trapping smells of spices, charcoal, olive oil and manure.

On approaching Ankara they had half circled the city before darting furtively across a tree-lined boulevard to vanish into the old town. As they climbed higher now in this maze of streets, Mrs. Pollifax glimpsed the top of the Citadel ahead and then lost it. A moment later they halted. Slowly, laboriously, Sandor backed the van through a hole in a crumbling wall. They emerged in a courtyard, abandoned except for a solitary goat tied to a ring in the wall. An old adobe building, its roof open to the sky, gave shade to the sparse tufts of grass on which the animal fed.

Sandor cut the engine. "You wait here," he said. "I go find Bengziz Madrali. He is receiver of stolen goods—I make sure he receive *you* now. If anyone comes, hide in the old *khan*." He was gone before Mrs. Pollifax could protest.

"What's a *khan*?" she asked Colin.

"An inn." Staring at the gate through which Sandor had van-

ished, he said, "I rather like him but I can't think why." Colin's gaze swept the courtyard and he brightened. "I say, that looks like a Hittite frieze propping up that door. Hand me my camera, will you?" He got out and began to prowl through the litter around the door, keeping a respectful distance from the goat.

"How nice to see you again!" Magda said cheerfully, crawling from the interior of the van to sit down beside Mrs. Pollifax. "Perhaps you can tell me where we are?"

"We've reached Ankara." She spoke urgently. "We've not been able to talk and you must realize that from my point of view this journey to Yozgat is on faith alone. What is it that we go there for?"

Magda hesitated. "I dare not say now. But in Yozgat I find the people who smuggled me from Bulgaria into Turkey." She added quietly, "I do not know how you feel about gypsies, but they did some valuable things for the Allies during World War Two—"

"Gypsies!" exclaimed Mrs. Pollifax in surprise.

"Yes. Some wander all over Europe, while some have settled down, like the gypsies in Istanbul who live in the Tin Village. It is with them I hid when I first escaped from Stefan and Otto."

Mrs. Pollifax said in astonishment, "Do you mean it's the gypsies who got you across the border into Turkey?"

Magda nodded. "To be accepted by them is not easy; the Rom look on *gorgios* (nongypsies) with deep contempt. But years ago we worked together; I gained their trust; I learned their language, and I know a few of them as true friends. Yes, it is to the Inglescus that I entrusted everything when I realized I was being followed. They promised to wait for me at Yozgat for a few days before they continued south to their summer rendezvous."

"But this is remarkable," said Mrs. Pollifax. "You have your own private underground!"

Magda smiled. "You put it well. But, please, you will remember the name Inglescu if anything goes wrong with me? Find them and say Magda sent you."

"But can they be trusted with what you left them?"

"Yes," she said flatly.

"I can't help wondering why you suddenly left your old life. Were you found out?"

Magda smiled. "No. I decided to retire."

"Retire!" cried Mrs. Pollifax.

At the expression on her face Magda burst out laughing. "Did you never think of people like me wishing to retire? I will no doubt be a shock to my superiors—agents are supposed to die violently and early. But I have just gone on surviving—and without even paying dues to the Social Security."

"What do you plan to do?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

Magda shrugged. "I bring my own social security with me, as you will see. I wish to live a quiet life; to grow flowers and think good thoughts, to have real friends. I am tired of violence, of uncertainty, of remaining always detached lest someone I grow to like must be betrayed, or betray me. Most, I am tired of acting the double part."

Mrs. Pollifax looked at her and was curiously touched. She thought of the dangers which this woman must have met. The story was written clearly in the lines of Magda's face: Those are good lines, she thought, lines of humor and compassion and deep sadness. And I heard her laugh— Her hand went out to Magda's.

"There is one thing," she said quietly, "that complicates our getting to Yozgat and to the gypsies. Before I left Washington I was given the name of a Dr. Guillaume Belleaux in Istanbul to whom we could appeal for help if we needed it. The house in which you were drugged last night—the house to which Stefan and Otto took you—turned out to be his home."

Magda's lips formed an O and her eyes widened. "*Mon dieu!* But is this man aware that you know this? Did he see you?"

"Yes to both questions." Mrs. Pollifax shook her head. "He didn't see Colin, but he and I looked at each other across the room. Briefly but memorably."

"So he too plays the double game!" Magda reached out and gently touched Mrs. Pollifax. "Then we must stay alive a little longer to annoy him, yes?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Pollifax, but she winced a little as she reflected upon the odds. She did not even know if Sandor would return, though she was trusting to his Machiavellian nature to bring him back, if only to arrange what would happen next.

The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax

Mrs. Pollifax waved at Colin, who had wandered out of the inn. He said dreamily, "Just think, these walls were standing when Tamerlane and his Mongols came through this part of the country." He patted his camera. "I got a wonderful shot of that frieze and the old walls inside. No Sandor yet?"

"Here he comes," said Magda.

Mrs. Pollifax had to control her gladness at seeing this disreputable, grinning, filthy man loping through the gateway. She thought that even if he shaved and bathed she would recognize him because he would still exude the same boundless joy in living and in outwitting whatever forces resisted him. He had obviously been busy, for his arms were full of bundles.

"I am back," he cried. "I have found Bengziz Madrali and he will help. We go to meet him now, but first here are good Turkish peasant clothes so you will become incognito. For you ladies the baggy pants. Also the veil, the shirt and the shawl. And for you," he said happily to Colin, "the sweeping *moustachio* and a hat and trousers. You will look like me, eh? Could anything be better?"

"Oh, nothing," Colin said dryly.

"Then wotthehell, change now in the truck and we go. Madrali has a feel for intrigue, and the roadblocks are up."

Mrs. Pollifax, who was halfway across the courtyard with her new clothes in her arms, stopped. "Roadblocks?"

He nodded pleasantly. "Twenty minutes ago. *Pfut*—suddenly police stopping everyone. Madrali says officially it is the new government traffic study but he hears they look for specific peoples." Sandor beamed at them. "You do not wish to be specific peoples, do you? Incognito please—at once!"

MRS. POLLIFAX felt delightfully at ease in the room which looked exactly like a thieves' den. Shadows leaped across the ceiling from candles burning in wall sockets, and from the charcoal brazier on which their dinner of *tel kadayif* and *pilav* had been cooked. Seated cross-legged on the floor with a tray on his lap, Bengziz Madrali squinted over the three identity cards he was forging for them. As he examined his work through a jeweler's glass he occasionally grunted or flashed Mrs. Pollifax a smile of reassurance.

"Your name is now Yurgadil Aziz," commented Sandor, eating with his fingers from a platter and looking over Madrali's shoulder. "The other lady is Nimet Aziz, and he"—pointing a dripping finger at Colin—"is Nazmi Aziz."

Lost: one Emily Pollifax, she thought, and glanced ruefully at the black baggy pants engulfing her legs. From the corner Magda gave an amused laugh. Her hair had been dyed brown, then set in fat steel curlers that bristled gruesomely all over her head. She smoked a Turkish cigarette with elegant fastidiousness, her hand moving gracefully with no sign of being attached to her body, which had become lost inside her voluminous Turkish disguise. Near her sat Colin, loading his still camera with film for the passport photograph he was going to take of Magda when the curlers were removed. Catching Mrs. Pollifax's glance he said irritably, "You know I've got to develop the picture and then it's got to dry!"

In appearance she thought he outdid them all. He wore shabby striped trousers tied with a belt of rope, a vest too tight across his chest, a purple shirt and a pink bow tie. His sweeping mustache left him almost mouthless and he kept trying to look down at it, which caused his eyes to cross. Yet in spite of all this he had acquired a definite air of distinction. Freed of his sense of failure, Colin had the fierce look of a mountain brigand. There is more of his family in him than he knows, thought Mrs. Pollifax with amusement. She stood up and felt Magda's head. It was dry. Removing the curlers she said, "Mr. Madrali, you have the suntan makeup and the white backdrop for the passport picture?"

"Evet, evet," he said, nodding. "Over there, pliss."

Colin shook his head. "I still can't imagine how you expect to get her out of the country when we can't even get out of Ankara."

"I go look into that soon," Sandor said, finishing his dinner.

"Good. The white blouse, please," said Mrs. Pollifax. She took Magda behind a screen and helped her change out of her Turkish clothes and into her own navy blue suit.

Sandor called to Mrs. Pollifax, "But she needs the passport itself to leave a country."

"She has a passport," Mrs. Pollifax said calmly.

"Wotthehell, you forge those, too?"

The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax

"It's a very legal passport," she told him as they returned. She began applying tan makeup to Magda's white face. "There," she said, "now the lipstick. I think she looks rather like an undernourished poetess, don't you, Colin?"

Sandor went out, looking mystified. Colin said, "You're quite right; I wouldn't have believed it possible."

Flashbulbs illuminated the room several times; then Magda lay down and went to sleep. Colin was tiresomely cross about developing the film, and since Mr. Madrali was still engrossed in his forgeries Mrs. Pollifax opened the door and walked out.

The tiny house in which Mr. Madrali lived—or hid—leaned against the walls of the Citadel. Mounting the tamped-down earthen path behind his house, Mrs. Pollifax looked up at the wall that had withstood a thousand years of earthquakes, pillage and armies, then down at the rows of primitive hovels dropping to the base of the hill. The sun was disappearing behind the distant mountains, leaving a blaze of color in the sky, but on the plains surrounding Ankara twilight had already fallen.

As she stood transfixed the last notes of a muezzin's chant reached her ears from below, sounding phantomlike in the high clear air, and Mrs. Pollifax thought, I shall have to come back and really see this country. Yet she knew that if she did come back it would be entirely different. It was the unexpected that brought this joy in being alive. It was safety following danger; it was food after hours of hunger, rest following exhaustion; it was the astonishing strangers who had become her friends.

She was still standing there when Sandor walked up the path. It had become quite dark. "Is that you?" he said, peering at her. "Yes," she said. "Where have you been?"

He said, "I have biggest good luck! The twice-a-week bus for Yozgat leaves at dawn. It will be hot, cheap, very crowded. Already the families sleep at Ulus Square, waiting."

"But won't the police be stopping the buses, too?" she asked.

"When you see the buses you understand," he said. "Only Turks take them—tourists never!—and they buy tickets distantly ahead. But wotthehell, for big price I get four tickets to Yozgat."

"Four?" she echoed.

He said modestly, "For a little extra I come, too. You need me for the translations."

She looked at him gratefully. "Oh, I scarcely dared hope—"

Sandor took her arm. "Please, go inside now before we are heard speaking English. Tomorrow at dawn we go to Yozgat and I help you look for the gypsies you seek."

6

As THEIR official guide Sandor took over with stern authority. At three in the morning he awoke them. "For you to be real peasants you will do rest of the sleeping in Ulus Square, like others."

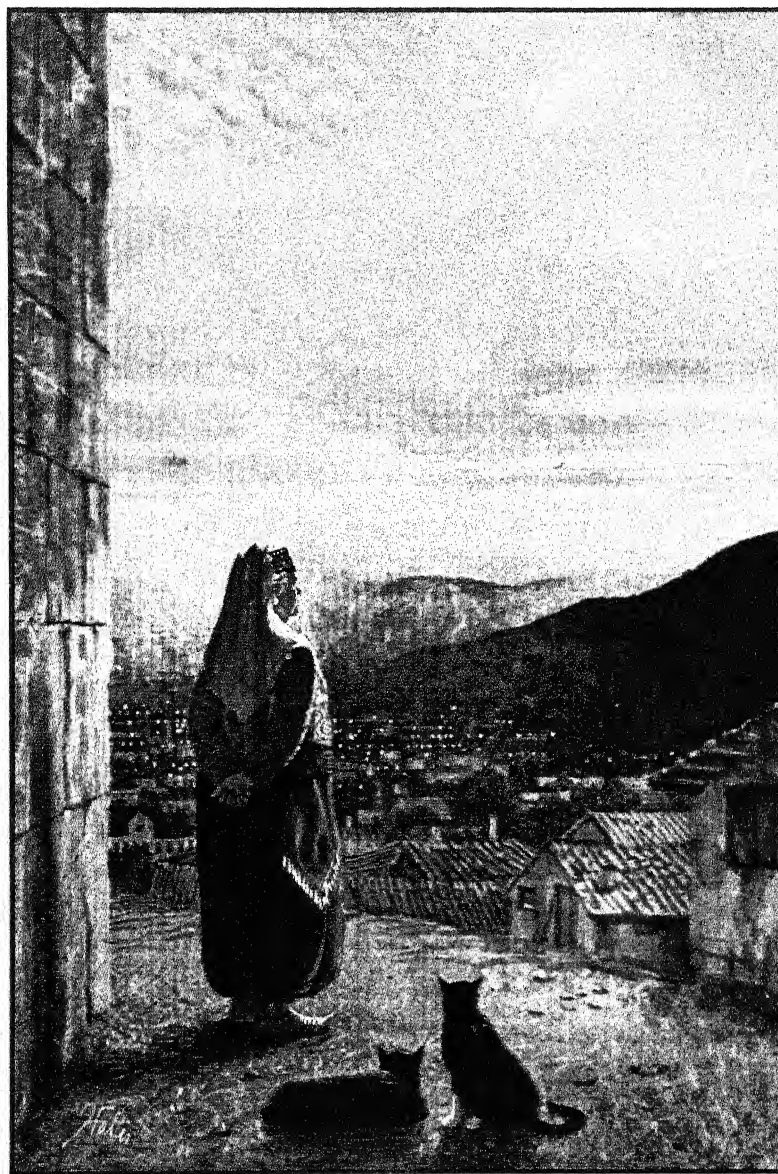
The three of them arose stiffly from their floor mats. They would wash at the public well, Sandor told them; Madrali was bringing tea and fruit for their breakfast, also a basket lunch for the bus. He produced a battered cardboard suitcase into which Mrs. Pollifax packed her suit for Magda to wear later, and Colin added some spare reels of film. His cameras he carried in a string bag. Mrs. Pollifax checked her pantaloons for the wads of money and Magda's passport. Her flowered hat was presented to Mr. Madrali with instructions to dispose of it, as well as her emptied purse.

They started out in the pale light of dawn. At the base of the hill they wrung Mr. Madrali's hands, thanked him and were on their way. "I think I could get to like these baggy pants," said Mrs. Pollifax, lengthening her stride. "Is my headgear properly wrapped? Are you sure we look all right?"

"Very good," Sandor said gravely. "Except you act like American. To wear the veil pulled so across the mouth you must be very shy, you come from a small village. Do not walk so fast, so happy, and please stay behind us men!" He shrugged apologetically. "Not for myself, but for the role. Anatolian women, they work hard, say nothing, you understand?" He added, "You do not look so Turkish as the other lady, you see."

"Oh—sorry," she said contritely, falling behind him and Colin.

"And stop talking English," contributed Colin, delivering the final snub.



Over her veil, Magda's eyes gleamed with amusement. "It worked," she said. "You look properly cowed now."

Mrs. Pollifax said in a peevish undertone, "It's all very well for you—he said you look the part."

"Touché," said Magda. Her throaty little laugh suggested that she would be delightful company in more relaxed circumstances. They turned down a tree-lined boulevard past buildings so modern that Mrs. Pollifax might have forgotten she was in the Near East but for a flock of turkeys being driven screeching and flapping, across an intersection.

When they reached the square an ancient wooden vehicle stood beside the curb with dozens of families squatting around it. Sandor reminded them that they must not speak, but keep smiling agreeably. After about an hour the driver came whistling across the boulevard, unlocked the bus and began shouting to the passengers to bring their suitcases for storage on top. A policeman wandered over and alarmed Mrs. Pollifax by asking to see the identity cards and bus tickets of everyone waiting to leave.

"Do not panic," whispered Sandor.

When the policeman reached Mrs. Pollifax she concentrated on looking as small and submissive as possible. "Yurgadil Aziz," he said musingly, as he examined her identity card. "*Bilet?*" he added, holding out his hand.

Sandor produced four bus tickets from his pocket. Mrs. Pollifax gathered that because the tickets had all been sold days earlier, their possession precluded any of them being newly arrived Americans wanted by the police. The tickets were handed back, the policeman moved on, the bus driver shouted, passengers swarmed onto the bus. A pig squealed. Men and women laughed. Those without seats sat on the floor. The trip to Yozgat was begun.

SEVEN hours later the bus jolted into Yozgat. After so long in such cramped quarters everyone aboard knew that three of the passengers did not speak Turkish: they were foreigners and therefore guests and they were smiled at, handed sweets and offered seats on the aisle away from the dust that billowed through the open windows. Nevertheless the journey seemed endless and Mrs.

Pollifax felt sorry for Magda, who was looking horrible again.

As the bus halted in Yozgat Square, honking its horn dramatically, Mrs. Pollifax stood up and looked for Colin, who had become trapped in the rear and could only wave and shrug. Magda was helped from her seat by Sandor. At the front of the bus he jumped down first, followed by Magda, who almost fell into his arms. Mrs. Pollifax stepped down behind them, lifted her head to look around her at Yozgat and abruptly stiffened.

A man had stepped forward from the cluster of people on the pavement to scrutinize each passenger. Now he was staring attentively into Mrs. Pollifax's half-concealed face; his glance moved to Sandor and then to Magda, who swayed on Sandor's arm. The man was easy to recognize because of his small, pointed, white goatee. It was Dr. Guillaume Belleaux.

Now he approached Mrs. Pollifax and spoke to her in Turkish, his eyes resting with amusement on the wisps of hair that escaped her shawl. Before she had even faced the problem of replying he whipped back her scarves to expose her face. "Mrs. Pollifax, is it not?" he said cheerfully. "Precisely the woman Mr. Carstairs cabled me to take care of—which I plan to do at once! And your two companions would be Madam Ferenci-Sabo and Mr. Colin Ramsey." He waved to someone across the street. "I am aware that you know karate," he continued smoothly. "One move toward me and the gun that I hold under this newspaper will kill you."

"Wotthehell!" said Sandor, but whether he was shocked at being mistaken for Colin, or by the gun, it was impossible to guess.

Mrs. Pollifax sighed. To get safely away from the Ankara police they had endured those seven hours on a bus only to walk into Dr. Belleaux's waiting arms. It did seem unfair.

"The car is coming—patience, please," said Dr. Belleaux. He turned and saw Colin, who stood gaping on the bottom step of the bus. He said sharply, "*Hareket etmek cabucak!*"

Colin closed his mouth, and to Mrs. Pollifax's astonishment, he snarled, "*Evet, evet,*" in a surly voice and walked stiffly away. Then it dawned upon her that Dr. Belleaux had not recognized Colin; he had looked for two women and a man and he had found them. Colin, bless him, had understood this at once. She and

Sandor exchanged glances, then the car drew up and Dr. Belleaux said, "Get in, please!" He held the door open. "No, Mr. Ramsey, sit in front, please, where I can shoot you if you prove difficult."

To enlighten Sandor, Mrs. Pollifax said coldly, "Allow me to introduce you. I believe this is Dr. Guillaume Belleaux, the leader of the gang who tried to kill us on the road to Ankara." She saw Sandor's eyes blaze. "The gentleman beside you," she added tartly, "is Stefan, who abducts people and drugs them, too."

Ignoring her, Dr. Belleaux leaned forward. "That street over there, Stefan, then left and a sharp right." The car turned off the square, past a corner café whose signs read *CIKOLATA-SIGARA* and *KOKA-KOLA* (I can read that, thought Mrs. Pollifax), and down a cobbled street that soon turned into a primitive dirt road.

"Where are we going?" inquired Mrs. Pollifax.

"Not far," said Dr. Belleaux. "It seemed wisest to rent one of Yozgat's houses while we waited for you. I guessed you would be disguised to avoid the police. But of course they never knew you were coming to Yozgat. It gave Stefan and me *such* a pleasant advantage!" He leaned forward again. "Stefan, drive around to the rear of the house. I don't wish the car seen from the road."

They pulled up behind a low, shuttered house of adobe brick, a quarter of a mile away from its nearest neighbor. "Assim is inside," Dr. Belleaux told Stefan. "Blow the horn once."

Stefan did so. A man with a cruel, sullen face appeared, and the prisoners were hustled into the house.

When the door shut behind them it closed out all sunshine. Not even the shutters betrayed threads of light. Dr. Belleaux lighted a candle, and then a lantern. "In here," he said, and they were pushed into one of two back rooms. This was a room which animals had obviously once shared with humans. The floor was of beaten earth; a pile of old hay filled one corner and there was a strong smell of manure. Once there had been an outside door; it had been bricked in but not whitewashed. Assim tied the three of them by their wrists and ankles to wooden chairs. Then Dr. Belleaux beckoned his helpers into the other room and Mrs. Pollifax could hear them speaking in Turkish.

She said softly, "Magda—you are all right?"

Magda lifted her head and wanly smiled. "Yes, but to come finally to Yozgat, to be so close—" She stopped.

Sandor's voice choked with rage. "Even I have heard of this Dr. Belleaux. I am shocked. There must be the way to get free!"

Mrs. Pollifax sighed. "Such as what?"

"There's Colin."

Mrs. Pollifax said gently, "He doesn't even know where we are. He is alone, inexperienced and unaccustomed to violence."

"Since meeting you he has seen a little," pointed out Sandor. "We cannot just die like trussed pigs; there has to come a moment—" He was silent as Dr. Belleaux reentered the room.

"We have just been consulting on the arrangements," said Dr. Belleaux. "I have an interest in a small archaeological dig not far from here—you will be buried there tonight."

"And what will you tell Mr. Carstairs?" said Mrs. Pollifax.

Dr. Belleaux smiled charmingly. "Why, that I searched everywhere but that you and your little party had vanished completely!"

"He really cabled you about me?" Mrs. Pollifax asked.

"Oh indeed yes, just last evening, and giving a very full description of you—he had cabled me earlier about Henry Miles but failed to mention you. It was fairly simple to dispose of Miles as well as the first chap, whom I believed Miles was replacing. But when you stole Ferenci-Sabo from my own house, I still had no idea you worked for Carstairs, can you imagine?"

"How stupid you must feel," she agreed pleasantly. "For how many years have you been a double agent?"

"It scarcely matters," he said. "Actually I've been what is referred to as a 'sleeper.' That is, held in abeyance for something truly worthwhile. Ferenci-Sabo's defection was big enough to bring orders for me to capture her at any cost, including my usefulness as a friend of the Americans and the Turks." He smiled. "However, the cost looks very small indeed. By tomorrow I can look forward to resuming my *very* pleasant life in Istanbul. But now," he concluded, his voice changing, "I must get to work."

"*Hain*," growled Sandor.

"What does that mean?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"It means traitor," said Dr. Belleaux indifferently. He stared

down at Magda. "Now what I should like to learn first," he said, "is why the Americans have been brought into this, and how they were contacted. Lift your head!" he demanded.

Slowly Magda looked up. "I want you to talk," he said in a suddenly chilling voice. "You will tell me why and how you contacted Mr. Carstairs. You will tell me where the papers are you brought with you, and why you insisted on coming to Yozgat."

"No," said Magda.

Methodically and viciously, Dr. Belleaux began to hit Magda across the cheekbones, and Mrs. Pollifax closed her eyes so that no one would see her tears. Back and forth went the hand—one, two, one, two—but Dr. Belleaux had miscalculated Magda's stamina. Her head suddenly went limp—she had mercifully fainted.

"Bastard," shouted Sandor.

Dr. Belleaux turned to Mrs. Pollifax and she realized that her turn was next. A picture of her sunny apartment in New Brunswick flashed across her mind and she thought, Is anything worth all this? and then she steadily met Dr. Belleaux's gaze. He stood over her, eyes narrowed, fist lifted, and she prayed for courage.

STEPPING down from the bus, Colin was appalled to see Dr. Belleaux in conversation with Mrs. Pollifax. He had not glimpsed Dr. Belleaux at his house in Istanbul but he recognized him from newspaper pictures. As his eyes dropped to the paper that Dr. Belleaux held in such a peculiar position he realized a gun was hidden there. He stood frozen to the bottom step of the bus, blocking the exit. Behind him voices rose in protest, drawing the attention of Dr. Belleaux, who told Colin in Turkish to move. Colin answered, "*Evet, evet,*" and walked across the street.

There he stopped, suddenly aware that Mrs. Pollifax and Magda and Sandor had just been captured. He thought of shouting for the police, until he remembered that in joining Mrs. Pollifax he had placed himself beyond their help. There was nothing he could do. He saw Dr. Belleaux wave to a man in a parked car; the man drove up behind the bus and Colin's friends climbed inside. The car passed quite near him, and he saw that the driver was Stefan. He was certain he would never see his friends again.

Furiously Colin glared at the people around him: ancient men drowsing on benches, a woman sweeping with a twig broom, the bus driver loading sacks of mail. At the corner a narrow, fly-specked café opened to the square—one sign said *CIKOLATA-SIGARA*; another advertised *KOKA-KOLA*. Three bicycles leaned against the wall. Without thinking, Colin crossed the square, snatched up one of the bicycles, mounted it and pedaled madly down the street the black car had taken. There were shouts behind him but he ignored them. He must catch that car.

He became increasingly aware that he was being pursued. He pedaled past low rock walls and peeling stucco houses until the cobbles ended at two unpaved roads. As he hesitated, his pursuer pedaled up beside him: it was, of all things, a girl, who proceeded to upbraid him in a flurry of Turkish.

Despairingly, he cried in English, "I can't understand you."

The girl stopped in midsentence, her eyes enormous. "But you speak English! You're not Turkish!"

"Yes, I'm English, and I've lost my friends; they're in that black car that drove down this street, and I'm terribly sorry to have— But I say—you speak English, too!"

She said impatiently, "I go to college in Istanbul. But what are you doing dressed like a peasant?"

"I must find that car!" he said, ignoring the question. "Look, I'll return your bicycle, I promise. Or come along if you doubt me."

"I will go with you," she said firmly. "The car went to the left; do you not see the dust?"

They pedaled up the road to the left. At the last house—isolated and some way away—a faint cloud of dust lingered. "They are in that one," the girl said. "I will wait while you go to the door."

"It's not that simple," Colin said, dismounting and turning to look at her. His first impression had been of a slightly plump young woman with a candy-box sort of prettiness. Now he saw that she was exquisitely lovely. Her skin was flawless, her lips full, her eyes huge, round, heavily lashed and a vivid blue that contrasted with her dark hair. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Sabahat Pasha. What is yours?"

"Nazmi Aziz," he said absently.

"What? But you are not Turkish!"

He flushed. "Actually it's Colin Ramsey but—oh hang it all, do go now," he said, parking his bicycle against a wall.

She laughed. "How can I ride two bicycles back into town? And why do you not make sure your friends are there?"

He looked at her helplessly. How could he possibly explain?

"Something is wrong," she said. "You are in some kind of trouble." The laughter had gone from her eyes.

"Yes," he admitted. "But it's not a police matter," he added hastily. "They're Americans, and calling the police would—well, prove very embarrassing."

"Americans!" she exclaimed. "Oh I would love to meet them! What brought them to Yozgat? Are they studying the customs?"

"We came to—" He stopped. It occurred to him that help might be available after all. He said excitedly, "Sabahat, are there gypsies camping near Yozgat?"

She looked startled and then thoughtful. "There were a number of them camped outside of town for a few days. They read the palms of many of my friends. But I hear they left yesterday, and now there is only the man with the dancing bear."

"Do you know where he stays?"

"Yes. Beyond the mosque, on the road leaving town. I have seen his wagon. Also his dog." She shivered distastefully.

He said recklessly, "Please—if I ride the bicycle back to town, could you direct me to the gypsy with the dancing bear?"

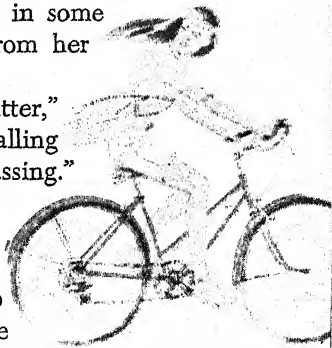
She seemed disturbed, then suddenly she laughed. "Your mustache has slipped!" she said.

He grinned. "I'm not surprised; the blasted thing itches, too." He straightened it as the girl watched gravely.

She nodded suddenly. "Come—I will take you to him myself. You would not be able to speak to him. I'm sure my friend won't mind if I borrow the bicycle a little while longer."

"That's awfully kind of you," he said gratefully. Then he turned his bike around and followed her back into town.

When they reached the square the bus had departed and near



the bus stop stood a cardboard suitcase and a string bag. "Good grief—my cameras! And Magda's suitcase!" he gasped. He stowed them away on the back of the bicycle, and with Sabahat in the lead they set out to look for the gypsy.

THE gypsy's cart stood off the road, half hidden by trees. His campfire was guarded by a ferocious-looking dog. "He must be at home because the bear is tied up to the wagon," Sabahat said, and added nervously, "but the dog is not tied."

"I'll go first," Colin told her.

No sooner had they left the road than the dog sprang up, growling, and started toward Colin, baring its teeth. Colin stood still, his heart hammering. Just then the gypsy appeared from the woods and stood watching, his gaze hostile. "I must talk to you," Colin shouted. "Call off your dog." Behind him Sabahat bravely translated, her voice quivering only a little.

The gypsy spoke to the dog and it slunk away. As Colin and Sabahat wheeled their bicycles nearer, Colin said, "Tell him I'm looking for gypsies who were supposed to be here in Yozgat."

Sabahat and the gypsy exchanged words. "He says you have to give him money. And he wonders what you want of gypsies."

"I have a message from a friend of theirs. She crossed the border into Turkey with them. Now she's in trouble and needs help."

The man's glance was inscrutable. When he had listened to Sabahat he asked with much casualness what the name of that lady might be who was a *gorgio* yet a friend of the Rom.

"Magda," said Colin, not daring to speak her last name.

The man shrugged. He said he knew of no such person.

Colin suddenly remembered the passport photographs. Kneeling, he burrowed through the suitcase and found two discarded pictures of Magda. He carried one of them to the gypsy.

A flash of recognition in the man's eyes was quickly replaced by suspicion. Colin groaned. "Blast it, now he probably thinks I'm the police. Sabahat, I want you to tell him, very carefully, that Magda is in Yozgat. She was kidnapped an hour ago."

Sabahat looked at him in astonishment. "Kidnapped?"

"Please tell him," Colin begged. "If he does not believe me he

can go and see for himself. Tell him the name of the street and that two men took her to an abandoned house there."

The gypsy's eyes narrowed. He began to speak.

Sabahat said breathlessly, "He says the gypsies left here late yesterday and began moving south on the road to Kayseri. And he says he would like to see the house in Yozgat of which you speak."

Colin drew a sigh of relief. "Thank God—then he does know what I'm talking about!"

The gypsy spoke again. "He also wishes me to tell you," said Sabahat, "that unfortunately he has no guns."

Colin said, "Tell him I am a believer in nonviolence."

"Are you really?" cried Sabahat breathlessly. "Oh but so am I! And all my friends from college," she said with shining eyes. "Tell me, have you experienced any—what are they called—love-ins?"

Colin shook his head. "I'm sorry, no."

"But kidnapping is such a violent thing—it is very difficult to imagine this. Who could do such a thing? Is it one of my people who has done this to your friend?"

"Actually a Frenchman, I think," Colin said.

"So *many* foreigners in Yozgat!" she exclaimed. "Oh how my friends would love to know of this; you cannot imagine our hunger to speak to people from other lands."

"How many friends have you in Yozgat?" Colin asked.

"Why, there are about twelve of us home from college." Her eyes suddenly slanted mischievously. "You are thinking of the same thing? You must be! I know you are!"

Colin looked at her and she looked at him, communication leaping between them. He thought he had never met anyone so perceptive unless it was his sister, Mia.

The gypsy spoke in a rush of Turkish to Sabahat. When he had finished she nodded to Colin.

"It's all right. He says he remained behind to wait for the woman Magda and to guide her to the other gypsies. He says if you are the police then he will kill you. Otherwise he will help us."

"Us?" Colin said in surprise.

She smiled at him. "If I abandon you now, how shall I ever learn if you succeed?"

Colin grinned. "All right. Tell him I'm awfully glad to have him on my side."

"Me, too?" she asked boldly, her cheeks turning pink.

"You, too," he said.

FROM where Colin and the gypsy crouched, the town seemed far away. They had reached the shed behind the house where Magda, Mrs. Pollifax and Sandor had been hidden since twenty past one that afternoon. It was now half past three. They slipped around to the front of the shed to reconnoiter. The gypsy pointed to the car and Colin nodded. They crept across the yard to its shadows, where the gypsy unsheathed a long knife and slashed each tire. Then they moved to the rear of the house and sat down under one of the shuttered windows, pressing their ears against the wall.

A moment later Colin heard Sandor's voice repeat over and over, "*Tikiyüzlü . . . ikiyüzlü . . .*" It was a word he had heard his uncle use and he knew it meant hypocrite, or more literally, someone who wore two faces. Well, Sandor at least was still alive.

The gypsy had been studying the wall above their heads, and now he began running his hands lightly over the surface. Colin saw that a seam ran up, across and then down the wall, as if a doorway had been clumsily bricked over. The gypsy's fingertips came together at one particular adobe brick; he braced himself and lifted it almost out. He quickly put it back and smiled triumphantly at Colin. They began to check for more loose bricks, and found a dozen. The gypsy brought out another knife and without a word they began gently to pry loose the mortar surrounding other bricks. After a half hour Colin glanced at his watch, touched the gypsy's arm and whispered, "Sabahat." The man nodded, and Colin crept away to hurry back into town and meet her.

AFTER waiting fifteen minutes for Sabahat, Colin grew restless. She had instructed him to wait in the café, where she felt he would be least conspicuous; on the other hand, since women never entered cafés in Anatolia, he had to sit and watch for her on a bench near the door. The men seated around him looked as if they had been turned into stone fifty years ago; they remained

unmoving, lips closed around hubble-bubble pipes, eyes blank.

Three more men entered the café. Two sat down in a corner. The third said clearly, "*Raki*," and turned to survey the room.

Colin gasped. The third man was his uncle Hu. There he stood in his faded blue work shirt and khaki shorts, looking around for a face that interested him, his streaked hair bleached almost white after a week in the sun. Colin remembered that he was in disguise and met his uncle's gaze without flinching.

His uncle's trained photographer's eye slid over him, looked away and then slid back. A moment later, glass of *raki* in hand, Uncle Hu strolled over and sat down at the table nearest Colin. From the corner of his mouth he said, "Do you mind telling me what the devil you're doing here in Yozgat in that absurd mustache?" Colin froze. "Of course I don't mean to trespass," his uncle continued in a mild voice, "but I have just spent a most horrible night in the local jail. It seems that anyone found driving a Ramsey Enterprises vehicle is being detained by the police. I was released because I didn't answer to the description of the young sandy-haired chap they're looking for, who is traveling with a woman wanted for questioning in some fiendish murder in Istanbul."

Colin said despairingly, "Let's go outside."

"Delighted," said his uncle.

The sunlight was almost blinding. "How did you recognize me?"

His uncle said, "My dear chap, I have a remarkable memory for faces. When I saw you I thought, Those are Colin's cheekbones and eyes; in fact that looks precisely like Colin in peasant clothes and mustache. And then considering the circumstances, I thought, Why *not* Colin in peasant clothes and mustache? Now, what have you been up to while I've been in Erzurum?"

"Well, you see it's this way, sir," Colin said—"and I'll have to talk quickly—three friends of mine have been kidnapped here in Yozgat and are in a house about a mile away."

"I see. Of course you've got to get them out," said his uncle without so much as a blink of the eye.



The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax

"Yes, sir," Colin agreed with a faint smile.

"One of these—er, friends—is the alleged murderess the police are looking for?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir—but she didn't murder anyone. I was with her when Henry's body—" He stopped, unable to explain the events of the past two days. "It's all quite complicated," he added weakly. "Can't you just pretend you didn't see me and go on to Istanbul?"

"I could," his uncle said reflectively, "but not without hearing your plans. You have made plans, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Stop sirring me, I'm not your father." He frowned. "I won't have you going to jail—horrid places, Turkish jails. I'm not without experience in this kind of rescue operation—I was in the war, you know, and your mother would never forgive me if—"

At that moment Sabahat arrived and cried breathlessly, "It's all settled! Yozgat's leading poet is going to read a poem of welcome—and the Greek Orthodox priest is going to say a prayer!"

Uncle Hu looked appreciatively at Sabahat and then at Colin. "I say—you do seem to be managing something rather well. Do you mind terribly if I come along, too?"

7

MRS. POLLIFAX sighed and opened her eyes. She had fallen or been pushed to the floor, still tied to the chair, so that her cheek rested on the hard earth and any spontaneous movement was impossible. Through the open door she heard Dr. Belleaux say in a low voice, "Bring the serum out anyway. We'll have to risk its killing her; there's no other way . . ."

"Magda," Mrs. Pollifax tried to call, but it came out as only a whisper. She could see Sandor's feet not far away; she could not see more of him without lifting her head, and that was on fire with a pain that moved from cheekbone to brain. Concussion, she thought drowsily, and drifted off again into unconsciousness.

When she next opened her eyes it was with the impression that she had been having a nightmare of rats gnawing through the

wall. . . . But that is a rat in the wall, she thought, listening. I'm not losing my mind. I've regained consciousness! She tried to make sense of the voices from the other room. She heard ". . . having gone to Bulgaria to help with security arrangements for the Festival of Youth . . ." and then, "You had intended from the first to go to the British Consulate in Istanbul?"

"Not alone, no. . . ." That was Magda's voice, oddly toneless. "But I had not expected to be looked for so quick or so—so accurately. I could not make trouble for my gypsy friends."

Mrs. Pollifax frowned. Surely Magda ought not to be speaking about gypsies to Dr. Belleaux. She tried to practice thinking very carefully. She supposed it was Thursday—no, no, it must still be Wednesday, late afternoon or early evening of their arrival day in Yozgat, and Dr. Belleaux had promised that presently they would be shot and buried in an archaeological dig. She wondered if her body would ever be found and identified. Perhaps it was better if it weren't, since it would only prove extremely embarrassing to Mr. Carstairs and then of course there were her children. Roger and Jane would simply not understand how their mother came to be murdered in Turkey disguised as a native peasant woman.

As her sluggishness diminished Mrs. Pollifax heard Dr. Belleaux say clearly: "You have been described as a defecting Communist agent, Madam Ferenci-Sabo. You are known to the Russians in this manner, too. But actually you have worked for the Americans all these years, is this not true?"

Mrs. Pollifax gasped, terrifyingly alert at last. It must have been a truth serum they had administered to Magda. Words overheard earlier came back to her. . . . "We'll have to risk its killing her; there's no other way. . . ." *No no no*, she screamed, but no sound came from her throat. She began to struggle against the ropes, frustrated by her helplessness to halt Magda's confession.

"Yes," Magda replied. "I have been—am—a counteragent." As Mrs. Pollifax sagged defeatedly, she saw Sandor, his head turned to listen. She noted the gag stuffed into his mouth. She thought, Now he knows what Magda is, too.

"I see," Dr. Belleaux said. "Please tell me how you notified the Americans after your extraordinary escape from my men."

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"I took money. Stefan had left some on the table, Turkish lira. One of the gypsies in Istanbul sent a cable for me."

"And the address to which you sent it?"

Magda recited a cover address in Baltimore.

"Thank you!" said Dr. Belleaux cheerfully. "Now I would like to discuss with you where you have hidden the top-secret paper you brought out of Russia with—" He stopped abruptly. Mrs. Pollifax had heard it, too, a knock at the front door. It was repeated. "What the devil!" exclaimed Dr. Belleaux. "Stefan!"

"Evet," said Stefan calmly. "It is only a young girl; I saw her come. She has a notebook and pencil."

"Answer and get rid of her. Assim, hide the hypodermic. Cover the woman so she looks ill."

Mrs. Pollifax held her breath. If she could only scream. Practicing, she said in a small hoarse voice, "Someone—is—at—the—door." She at least captured Sandor's attention; he made a rumbling noise and strained at his ropes. Stefan was unbolting the front door. Mrs. Pollifax heard a young voice speak with a rush of enthusiasm and charm. "Help!" she called out raspily. "Help! Help!"

Dr. Belleaux murmured something and closed the door between the two rooms. Tears came to Mrs. Pollifax's eyes. "I'm sorry, Sandor," she said. "I would have liked to really scream but I couldn't." Sandor rumbled again. "I'm sorry you've been hurt," she told him. "I'm sure you wish you had never joined us, but you must have overheard enough to realize this is more important than any of us individually. I can only tell you—oh that rat in the wall is annoying," she cried. "It's not enough that we're surrounded by human rats—" She turned her head toward the outside wall, and gasped.

The wall was literally disappearing before her eyes. Sunshine was entering the dark room as brick after brick was tidily removed by a pair of large brown hands. "Wotthehell!" said Mrs. Pollifax incredulously, the word slipping from her lips. It had the effect of turning Sandor's head, and his eyes widened in shock. A man's face appeared in the opening. He was gypsy-looking. He lifted a finger to his lips and, after pulling himself through the hole, tiptoed across the room. He was followed by a second man, who was tall and sandy-haired. Ropes were slashed. Smoothly Mrs. Pollifax

was picked up and carried to the opening in the wall. Hands from outside gently grasped her bleeding fingers. She was half pushed, half pulled through the aperture into the blinding sun of a late afternoon that contained—of all things—a smiling Colin Ramsey.

"Colin!" she cried.

"Yes." He grinned. "Isn't it wonderful?" As Sandor was pushed out into the sunshine and the sandy-haired man followed him, the fierce-looking one began swiftly replacing the bricks. "You'll have to walk several yards before you can rest," Colin said firmly, "and we have only three minutes to do it."

She understood nothing except that she must walk, which was nearly impossible. Her feet felt lifeless and her knees kept betraying her. Colin supported her, and the sandy-haired man supported Sandor, and slowly they reached the cover of a grapevine at the front corner of the house. Here the third man caught up with them.

A van pulled up in front of the house. Half a dozen young people in Western clothes leaped down and began unloading trays of fruit and food, jugs of water and huge armfuls of flowers. A man in priest's robes climbed from the driver's seat and joined them as they began walking up to the house. "Oh, stop them!" Mrs. Pollifax whispered, "Dr. Belleaux has Magda in there!"

"We know that," Colin said calmly. "Sabahat knocked at the door a few minutes ago, saying she was taking a census. She reported three men and an invalid woman in the front room. Now," he said to the sandy-haired man.

The stranger nodded, walked to the empty van and backed it up the cart track to Mrs. Pollifax and Sandor. "Get in quickly," Colin said. They fell clumsily into the rear, and the van headed down into the street and stopped, its motor still running. Incredulously, Mrs. Pollifax leaned out to watch Colin and the dark gypsy-looking man move toward the house. The young people and the priest had gone inside, leaving the door wide open.

A moment later Colin and the gypsy came out, carrying an unconscious Magda. A girl joined them, laughing and calling over her shoulder to the young people behind her. For one incredible moment Mrs. Pollifax saw Dr. Belleaux fight his way to the door. A crowd of laughing youngsters pulled him back. His face livid,

he stretched out his hands toward Magda, and then someone placed a plate of grapes in them, a garland of flowers was lowered over his head and he was sucked back into the living room.

"What on earth!" cried Mrs. Pollifax to Colin as the two men placed Magda in the rear of the van.

Colin grinned. "It's a love-in. Dr. Belleaux is being smothered with nonviolence." He turned and grinned at the girl. "This is Sabahat Pasha, whose idea it was. Sabahat, ask Sebastien—" he indicated the gypsy—"to sit up front and guide us to his friends now, will you?"

"How do you do," Sabahat said, smiling at Mrs. Pollifax. "I'm so glad you are safe." She spoke to the gypsy in Turkish and then extended her hand to Colin. "I will make certain the three men do not get away for as long as is possible. It may help you a little," she told him gravely. "*Allaha ismarladik* (Good-by), Colin Ramsey."

"Not for long, Sabahat," he said, firmly holding on to her hand. "You know I'll be back. Meanwhile, how can I thank you?"

She dimpled charmingly. "But my friends have always wished to meet such a scholar as Dr. Belleaux—you are giving them a big day; it is I who should thank you!"

He grinned. "Fair exchange then." He released her hand and shouted, "Okay, Uncle Hu, let's go!"

As the van roared to life Mrs. Pollifax exclaimed, "Did you call that man Uncle Hu?"

"Quite a lot has happened," Colin said. "Yes, that's Uncle Hu. Letting him help seemed the least I could do; he's already spent one night in jail because of us. This is the van he was driving back from Erzurum. The chap with him is a gypsy named Sebastien, who stayed behind the other gypsies to wait for Magda."

Mrs. Pollifax looked at him in amazement. "Colin," she said, "you're an extraordinary young man."

He looked startled; then a smile spread over his face. "Yes," he said with an air of discovery, "I believe I am."

THEIR precipitate flight from Yozgat was interrupted by Sebastien, who reminded them that he had a horse, a dog, a wagon and a dancing bear to be retrieved. They dropped him off at the place

where he had made camp. He looked at Uncle Hu's map, then marked a cross on the road, halfway between Yozgat and Kayseri.

Uncle Hu said, "He tells me the gypsies will be somewhere near this cross, camping within sight of the road because they expect him to follow. He'll hope to catch up with us by dawn."

They thanked Sebastien profusely. At Colin's prompting, Mrs. Pollifax gave the gypsy money from the wad pinned inside her baggy pants; then they resumed their breakneck trip south.

Inside the jolting van, Colin was trying to wrap gauze around Sandor's bleeding wrists. "Uncle Hu always drives like this," he explained resignedly, "although I imagine he's trying to cover as much ground as possible before dark. There," he said, tying the last knot on Sandor's bandage and turning to Mrs. Pollifax. "Hold out your wrists."

"Shouldn't you do Magda's first?"

He shook his head. "She has an advantage over you; she's unconscious. But her wrists aren't in such bad shape; they must have been untied when they drugged her." He looked soberly at Mrs. Pollifax. "By the way, how much did Dr. Belleaux find out?"

She sighed. "Nearly everything. They gave Magda a truth serum." To Sandor she said, "You know who she is now, too."

He dropped his eyes. "Evet."

"But does Dr. Belleaux know about the gypsies?" Colin asked. When Mrs. Pollifax nodded he said, "What a foul piece of luck! That means he will know precisely where we're heading. Everyone in Yozgat can tell him the gypsies have gone south."

Mrs. Pollifax felt very weak and a little nauseated—by choice she would have been in a hospital, where she could sleep quietly between clean sheets, rousing only to sip nourishing liquids and to observe new ice packs being placed on bruises and swellings. She firmly put aside such thoughts. "Dr. Belleaux is going to be feeling very nasty," she said. "He's just lost that elegant Istanbul life of his that he planned to get back to tomorrow, after burying us in some ruins. What weapons do we have, Colin?"

He looked amused. "You've gone professional again. I'm relieved. I still have Stefan's pistol, with three shots fired."

"They did not find my gun," Sandor said. "But it's empty."

"Uncle Hu may have something," Colin said. "If he ever slows down I'll ask him." But as the road grew more atrocious their speed seemed to increase. Magda had been rolled into a rug and braced against one wall; she was almost to be envied, Mrs. Pollifax thought. Of course they could escape Dr. Belleaux for the moment by surrendering to the Turkish police, but this would cancel all hope of Magda's fleeing the country; even worse, they would then become sitting targets for Dr. Belleaux instead of moving ones. While their shocking charges against him were being investigated they would be detained by the police, many of whom had already been charmed by that genius of criminology, Dr. Belleaux. What would the headlines be then, she wondered: *Mysterious Explosion Wipes Out Political Prisoners?* or *Fire Sweeps Prison Wing, Five Dead?* It was too risky to contemplate. In any case, without passport and wanted for Henry's murder, Mrs. Pollifax could certainly not leave the country herself. But if Magda could somehow be spirited beyond the border then she at least would be free and could communicate with Carstairs.

She said, "How far are we from the border, Colin?"

"Which one?"

"Any—except Russian," she said.

Sandor answered. "From Greece about two hundred and fifty kilometers. From Syria maybe three hundred."

Mrs. Pollifax shook her head. "Too far. Where is the nearest airport then?"

Colin looked at her in dismay. "I believe there's one at Kayseri, about fifty miles south of us. But that's such a gamble."

She pointed out gently, "Every day that goes by will give Dr. Belleaux a better chance to find us, but if we move boldly—"

Abruptly the van ground to a halt. Uncle Hu slid open the window that separated the cab from the rear. "Radiator's boiled dry," he said, gesturing to the steam that surrounded the hood.

"Oh dear," said Mrs. Pollifax, and she followed Colin and Sandor out of the van.

"It will take time, maybe half an hour," Ramsey said. "Can't put cold water into a hot radiator or she'll crack, you know." He handed out sterno, pans and water jug. "Set it up, Colin." Nodding

pleasantly at Mrs. Pollifax he held out his hand. "How do you do. Hubert Ramsey's the name."

"Emily Pollifax," she said briskly, shaking his hand.

"That woman in there who was drugged—she hurt, too?"

"Bruised mainly. Still unconscious."

"Might as well leave her inside then." Ramsey began pouring water carefully into two pans. "Damn nuisance, this," he said.

Colin drew out his gun. "I'll take a look at the road behind us," he said, and climbed to the top of a cluster of rocks. "No one on the road for miles," he called. "Where are we, Uncle Hu?"

His uncle shouted back, "We passed through Osmanpasa. Must be about forty miles out of Yozgat, sixty from Kayseri."

The sun hung suspended over the distant mountains. Lavender and gold light bathed the wild land in the beginnings of dusk. They could ill afford this stop, Mrs. Pollifax thought. "Do you see any signs of the gypsy camp?" she called to Colin.

He turned and looked in the other direction. "No."

The first two pans of water were hot. Ramsey and Sandor opened the hood and the radiator and poured the water inside. "So far so good," Ramsey said, starting to refill the pans. "Drink some while we have it." He handed Mrs. Pollifax a cup.

"Do *you* know about an airport at Kayseri?" she asked hopefully.

"Oh yes, there's an airport there, and in summer there are several flights a week to Ankara and Istanbul."

Collin had joined them. "Mrs. Pollifax is determined to get our passenger"—he jerked his head toward the van—"on her way."

"Yes," said Mrs. Pollifax firmly. "Is it true that if we succeeded in getting her to Kayseri she would show her passport there, and *only* there, before leaving the country?"

"Quite right," Ramsey said. "She'd go through Passport Control and Customs at Kayseri, but at Istanbul she'd be issued an In Transit card during her wait in the air terminal. This she'd give up as she boarded her plane for London or Paris or wherever."

Mrs. Pollifax's interest increased. If they could get Magda to Kayseri; if she could walk through Customs, pass that terrifying moment of inspection, without being challenged and stopped. . . .

Colin said, "But we don't even know the plane schedules!"

Uncle Hu startled them both by saying, "I've got one in the van. I try to keep up-to-date on plane, train and boat schedules. The water's hot—pour it in, will you? I'll go and look."

A fresh batch of water was on the fire when he returned with a folder. "There's a Turkish airlines' flight Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, departing Kayseri eight a.m. and arriving in Istanbul at eleven. It connects with the noon flights to Paris and London."

"Well!" said Mrs. Pollifax, delighted. "I believe I'll go inside and see if Magda's stirring yet."

"I'll bring her some water," Ramsey said.

They all crawled into the van. Mrs. Pollifax felt Magda's pulse. "She seems all right," she said. "She just doesn't wake up."

Uncle Hu said, "We must give her the water before she becomes dehydrated. I'll hold her up. Colin, shine this flashlight on her face." Magda was lifted, still encased in her rug; the flashlight was turned on and Uncle Hu leaned over her. The cup suddenly slipped from his fingers to the floor. "*Who is this woman?*" he demanded in a shaken voice. "Where did you find her?"

They stared at him stupidly. His voice rose. "I know this woman! She was supposed to have died in Buchenwald about twenty-eight years ago! She's Alice Blanche."

Something stirred in Mrs. Pollifax's exhausted mind; Alice Blanche . . . but Blanche meant white in French, didn't it? Alice White—Alice Dexter White. . . . "You know her?"

He nodded. "During World War Two, when I escaped from prison camp. She hid me for three months in Occupied Paris. She—I—" He hesitated and then said simply, "She was very beautiful and very brave. I thought she was captured. Red Queen said so. You must think I'm talking absolute gibberish," he said, looking at Mrs. Pollifax. "She was an agent, you see."

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. She said quietly, "She still is. That's why you never found her."

He said in an appalled voice, "You can't be serious."

"I'm very serious. It's this woman our pursuers are really after, and it's she we must get to Kayseri for a plane out of this country. If you've had time for newspapers on your trip you may have read about a certain Magda Ferenci-Sabo."

Uncle Hu nodded. "Yes, that defecting Communist agent."

Mrs. Pollifax glanced down at Magda and said, "Meet your defecting Communist, Mr. Ramsey. Now we really must leave before it grows any darker or we'll never find the gypsies."

8

ARKNESS came, and nothing existed for them except the beam of the van's headlights on the stony road. Yet without the darkness they might never have seen the gypsy camp, for it was the light of the campfire that drew their eyes. Seeing it, Colin's uncle turned off the road and they bumped and jolted over a cart track.

"We've found Magda's gypsies," Mrs. Pollifax exclaimed as she peered out. She now saw that there were two fires, one at either end of a rectangular camp laid out among rocks and stunted trees. Six or eight wagons had been drawn up, and Colin's uncle drove neatly into the middle before he brought the van to a halt.

"We're here," he shouted over his shoulder.

"Yes," said Mrs. Pollifax gratefully. She opened the rear door and stepped down. Gypsies appeared like shadows around her and formed a solid circle of folded arms and hostile faces. Not one of them moved. For one nightmare moment Mrs. Pollifax wondered if they were going to kill her. She had never met with such an impenetrable wall of hatred. Something was terribly wrong.

Then from the shadows a voice said, "Good evening, Mrs. Pollifax!" Dr. Belleaux strolled smiling into the light, followed by Stefan and Assim. "I arrived twenty minutes ago by helicopter and warned these people about you." He said softly, "They already know that you've hidden Magda in the van and that you've beaten and drugged her. I've told them they mustn't kill you, but they are so very aroused, what is one to do?"

For a moment Mrs. Pollifax thought she was going to faint, but that would have been too merciful. "It's not true!" she flung at the gypsies, but the hostility in their mahogany faces did not waver. She felt whipped by their accusing eyes. "He lies!" she protested. "We're Magda's friends!"

Behind her Colin said in a shaken voice, "I don't think they speak any English, Mrs. Pollifax."

"They must know Turkish then! Sandor—Mr. Ramsey—translate, tell them quickly!"

"Good Lord, yes," murmured Uncle Hu, and stepped forward. He had begun to speak in Turkish when Stefan calmly walked up to him and hit him with his fist, sending him unconscious to the ground. At the same moment Mrs. Pollifax heard a startled grunt from Sandor on her right—he ducked his head and ran. The wall of gypsies shattered. With shouts the men took off after Sandor while the women tightened the circle around Mrs. Pollifax.

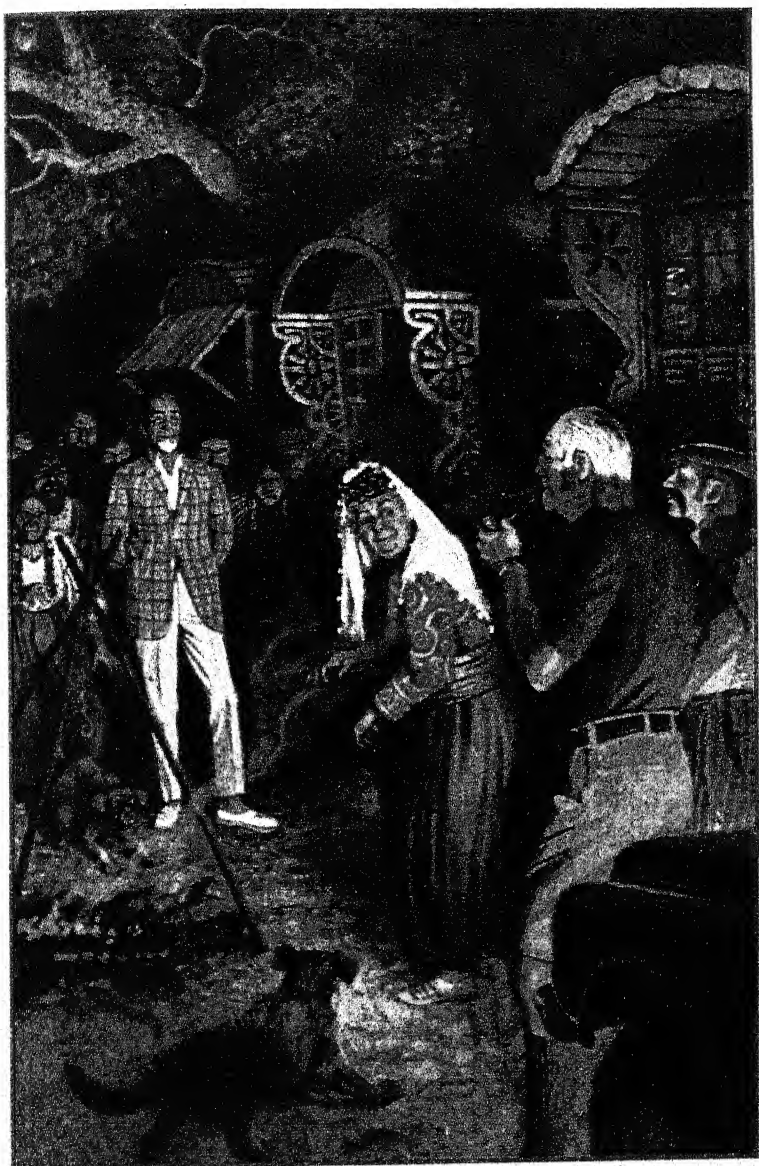
"No no no!" cried Mrs. Pollifax, stamping her foot. "Do understand! Magda is our friend; that man lies!" One of the women spat contemptuously. "You must listen to me!" Mrs. Pollifax insisted, "We're all in danger from that man."

Half a dozen women climbed into the rear of the van. There were murmurs and gasps, and then little crooning sounds as Magda was lifted and brought out. Gently they carried her toward the more distant campfire, with Dr. Belleaux following and speaking to them, obviously trying to whip them into a new fury.

Mrs. Pollifax turned toward Colin, who was leaning over his uncle. How could she possibly make the gypsies understand that if they didn't act quickly their beloved Magda would be killed?

Dr. Belleaux was shouting to Stefan. "Tie them up. We'll use the helicopter radio to contact the police. They can be here by dawn." What is he planning? she wondered as Stefan pushed her and Colin forward. Could Dr. Belleaux really afford to call in the police? Certainly by dawn he must expect to retrieve whatever document Magda had stolen from the Communists; if he already had this he would not be here when the police arrived? She was growing too tired to think.

Stefan led her and Colin past the second campfire, where Magda had been placed between blankets. Beside her sat a dark, tousle-headed boy of nine or ten, watching a woman apply ointment to Magda's face wounds. The woman looked up and hissed at Mrs. Pollifax as she passed. At some distance from the fire the prisoners' hands were tied behind them, and then to the trunk of a low,



stunted tree. From here they could no longer see the van or Uncle Hu lying beside it. They could see one gypsy wagon and a horse grazing in the shadows. They could see the fire and Magda's blanket-shrouded body, the woman, and the boy.

"Well," said Mrs. Pollifax dispiritedly.

"Well," said Colin.

Stefan had disappeared. The boy who had been beside Magda arose and walked across to Mrs. Pollifax and Colin. He sat down, cross-legged, a few yards from them, and watched without expression. Two young men suddenly appeared and began to search them. They unpinned Mrs. Pollifax's wad of money, shouted and held it high to show the boy, who laughed delightedly. They added Colin's watch and pen to their treasure and walked away.

"A pretty kettle of fish," said Colin savagely.

Mrs. Pollifax said wearily, "Surely someone here must understand English!"

Colin said, "They undoubtedly speak Bulgarian since they came from across the border. Of course they speak Romany, and probably some Hungarian and a little Turkish. But even if they know some English, our dear old friend Dr. Belleaux got here first."

"But why would we come to the gypsies at all—with Magda—if we'd beaten and drugged her?"

"For the same reason Dr. Belleaux came here: to get from the gypsies what Magda left here with them. In his case before she wakes up and calls him a bloody liar."

"If only she would—right now!" said Mrs. Pollifax with feeling. "But will Dr. Belleaux *allow* her to wake up?"

"No, but he can't very well kill her in plain sight of her friends." He added wryly, "At the moment I'm more worried about us. Nobody here would mind seeing *us* killed, and we haven't one single state secret up our sleeves to prolong our living. I keep thinking of Sebastien. He was going to follow us, remember?"

Mrs. Pollifax said gloomily, "But he didn't expect to find us before dawn, and it can't be midnight yet. I'd put my money on Sandor, who at least—" She stopped. The gypsies were bringing Sandor back into camp. One large muscular man carried him slung across his back like a slab of venison. The long procession passed

the campfire and disappeared. "Unconscious," she said despairingly. "Not even capable of explaining in Turkish who we are!"

Colin said, "What do you think Dr. Belleaux has in mind?"

Mrs. Pollifax considered. "Either he will fly Magda to Russia with the papers he mentioned, or he will kill her here and take the papers to Russia himself."

Before long Stefan and Assim reappeared, carrying a trussed-up but still breathing Sandor. They knotted him to the tree as well. Stefan said with a grin, "The gypsies hunt well for us, eh? We'll even let them kill you soon."

"Bring that tall thin man, too," said Dr. Belleaux, strolling in from the shadows. "What is his name?" he asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"I don't think I'll tell you," she said coldly.

He shrugged. "It scarcely matters." He regarded the tree with interest. "Perhaps this tree is the best solution for your demise. A little kerosene sprinkled at the base, a match, a flaming tree and there would be few embarrassing traces left to dispose of. It is difficult to puzzle out how to eliminate so many of you."

Mrs. Pollifax said, "I had expected something a little more imaginative from a man of your obvious taste and background, Dr. Belleaux. You must be growing quite desperate."

He nodded. "I naturally prefer the gypsies to kill you, as I think they will, but you have to be dealt with by dawn. In any case you may rest assured that I will evolve a way that will suit my own welfare—not yours," he added with a smile. "Ah, you have the fourth one, Stefan—good! He speaks Turkish, so gag him as well. Check all the knots, Assim, and then back to the helicopter."

Mrs. Pollifax said indignantly, "You must realize that Magda will never give you what you want."

Dr. Belleaux smiled. "Of course not, but the gypsies will. They believe what I tell them. I advise you to say your prayers. I shall be speaking now by radio to the police in Istanbul, and by dawn they should be rendezvousing here from all points of Anatolia."

"And you?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"I will be—elsewhere."

He walked away with Stefan and Assim, and the boy guarding them got up suddenly and ran off, leaving them alone.

"I'm terribly sorry, Colin," Mrs. Pollifax said with a sigh.

"If you're going to say what I think—don't. I was never your responsibility. I chose to come along, and I simply won't have you going all bleary and sentimental about me now."

She turned her head and looked at him. "I trust you realize that you're *not* a coward, and never have been!"

"That's choice, isn't it? And how else would I have found out?"

The boy was returning, but this time he walked up to Mrs. Pollifax and looked into her face searchingly; then from his pocket he drew out a small knife, leaned over and cut her ropes.

Colin said in astonishment, "I say—am I imagining things?"

The boy pressed a finger to his lips and beckoned to Mrs. Pollifax to follow him. "But the others!" she protested, pointing to Colin, Sandor and Mr. Ramsey. The boy shook his head. He tugged frantically at her baggy pants.

"Go with him for heaven's sake," Colin said in a low voice. "You're not going to look a gift horse in the mouth, are you?"

Torn between loyalty and curiosity, Mrs. Pollifax followed him. She limped with him past tethered horses and around rocks and wagons—a route that hid them from the other gypsies. Finally they reached a tent pitched between two boulders and faintly illuminated by a light inside. The boy pulled aside a curtain and Mrs. Pollifax entered. A lantern hung suspended from a tent pole, and seated cross-legged on a pillow beneath it was a square-shouldered gypsy woman. Hair threaded with silver hung to her shoulders, framing a dark, high-cheekboned face. The eyes smoldered under heavy lids. The boy beckoned Mrs. Pollifax to sit down in front of the gypsy, and Mrs. Pollifax stiffly lowered herself to the hard earth.

"Give me your hands," the woman said abruptly.

Mrs. Pollifax gasped. "You speak English!"

"Yes. The boy understands some but cannot speak it well."

Mrs. Pollifax's relief was infinite. "Thank heaven!" she cried. "I have tried—"

The woman shook her head. "Just give me your hands, please. Everything you wish to say is written in them."

Mrs. Pollifax obeyed. "But there is so little time—"

"The boy tells me he has listened to you speak, and that my people have been lied to." She was gently examining the palms of the hands. "Your wrists are bandaged."

"Yes. Like Magda's. The man in the white goatee did this."

"Hush." The woman closed her eyes, holding Mrs. Pollifax's hands in silence, as if they spoke a message to her. "You speak truth," she said abruptly, and opened her eyes. To the boy she said, "Bring Goru here—quickly! This woman does not lie."

As the boy ran out Mrs. Pollifax said, "You can really see this in a hand?"

"Of course. Lips may lie but the lines in a hand never do. You are a widow; your hand tells me also that you have begun a second life—a second fate line has begun to parallel the first one."

"All widows begin second lives," said Mrs. Pollifax gently.

The woman smiled. "With so many marks of preservation on that second line, showing escape from dangers? And a cross on the Mount of Saturn, foretelling the possibility of violent death at some future date?" She allowed Mrs. Pollifax to withdraw her hand. "But I am clairvoyant as well. I feel that you have come to this country only days ago—by plane—and I get a very strong picture of you tied to a chair in a room where there is straw in one corner, and a door that has been bricked over."

"How very astonishing!" said Mrs. Pollifax.

"You see the waste of words, then. But here is Goru."

Goru was enormous—it was he who had carried Sandor back to camp—and he was made even larger by his bulky sheepskin jacket. As the woman talked to him he looked at Mrs. Pollifax with growing surprise. Then he made a magnificent shrug, snapped his fingers and grinned. With a bow to Mrs. Pollifax he hurried out.

"We shall have some sport with that *gorgio*," the woman said in contempt. "He descended on us like a bird in his machine, and spoke urgently about Magda. He knew everything! How is that?"

"He drugged her earlier, with the kind of drug that produces confession," explained Mrs. Pollifax. "You will help us now?"

The woman's lip curled. "Wars. Assassinations. Drugs that make even a Magda speak—" She shook her head. "I do not understand your civilization. You came to this country to help Magda?"

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. "Magda spoke of going to Yozgat to find the Inglescus."

The woman nodded. "I am Anyeta Inglescu."

Mrs. Pollifax put out her hand. "I'm Emily Pollifax."

"But I do not understand why the man with the goatee goes to such trouble to speak lies," the gypsy added.

Mrs. Pollifax said bluntly, "He wants whatever it is that Magda brought out of Bulgaria and entrusted to you." She gestured helplessly. "Microfilm. Microdots. Code. She has told me nothing except that she preferred risking death to abandoning it."

Anyeta Inglescu laughed. "I see." Lifting her voice she called out, and the boy came into the tent. Taking his hand she said to Mrs. Pollifax, "This is what Magda brought out of Bulgaria. This is Magda's grandchild, Dmitri Gurdjieff. She entrusted him to us when she went to Istanbul to get help."

"Grandchild?" faltered Mrs. Pollifax. "Dmitri?" She stared incredulously at the boy, and then began to smile, and the smile spread through her like warm wine until it emerged in a laugh of purest delight. What exquisite irony for Dr. Belleaux, she thought, that the treasure Magda had smuggled to the West was her grandson! "But this is marvelous!" she cried. "Secret agents are fighting, bribing, even killing in their greed to learn what Magda brought out with her—and it's a small boy!"

They both regarded the boy tenderly, and he smiled. Mrs. Pollifax said, "I have three grandchildren myself, and you?"

Anyeta laughed. "A dozen at least. Perhaps you did not know that Magda had a daughter born of her first marriage. The daughter died last year. Her husband—Dmitri's father—is a high official in the Bulgarian Communist Party and scarcely known to the boy. He has remarried. Magda could not leave without the child."

The boy suddenly spoke. "Is not all." Reaching inside his ragged shirt he said, "Is time maybe to speak, Anyeta. There is more." He pulled out a blue stone tied to a string around his neck. "This."

Anyeta smiled. "That is your Evil Eye, Dmitri. It's part of your disguise. Turkish children wear them to ward off evil."

The boy shook his head. "Grandmama gave it me in Sofia."

Anyeta's eyes narrowed. "In *Sofia*?" she said in surprise.

"*Da*. Is hollow inside—for secrets."

Anyeta drew in her breath sharply. "Heaven protect us! I begin to understand . . . but what can it be?"

Mrs. Pollifax smiled. "Her social security, I think," she said, and the last piece of the puzzle fell into place.

Suddenly Goru was back in the tent. He spoke excitedly to Anyeta, then vanished. Anyeta turned to Mrs. Pollifax. "The man with the goatee has finished using the radio and is starting for the camp. Return quickly to your friends and be tied up again."

In spite of Mrs. Pollifax's horror of being tied again, she responded to the urgency in the woman's voice. At the door of the tent she turned. "You're not coming?" she asked.

The gypsy woman smiled. "I cannot walk properly," she said with a shrug of regret. "I have not been able to in fifteen years."

"I'm sorry," said Mrs. Pollifax.

Dmitri guided her back and tied her to the tree.

"What the devil!" cried Colin. "Didn't you make a dash for it?"

She shook her head. "It's all right, Colin—really. This boy understands English."

"He *does*?"

"*Shh*," said Mrs. Pollifax as Dr. Belleaux came back to the campfire. He leaned over the still unconscious Magda, nodded and straightened. Seeing the gypsies emerge from their wagons he began speaking eloquently.

"Born orator," growled Colin. "Real Hyde Park material."

"Can you catch any of it at all?"

"Just the word *kill*, which occurs with monotonous frequency."

Beckoning his audience closer Dr. Belleaux led them toward the tree where Mrs. Pollifax, Colin, Uncle Hu and Sandor were tied. There he suddenly drew out a knife, challenging one of the gypsies to use it. To Mrs. Pollifax's surprise Goru stepped forward and grasped the knife. He tested it lovingly with his fingers while the gypsies cheered with approval. Looking at their faces and then at the triumphant smile on Dr. Belleaux's lips, Mrs. Pollifax experienced a chill of doubt.

Goru called to one of his companions, who brought him a small jug. "*Icki*," Goru said, and held out the jug to Dr. Belleaux. With

a sigh of exasperation Dr. Belleaux accepted it. Another gypsy handed jugs to Stefan and Assim, and at once jugs blossomed everywhere among the gypsies. Apparently a toast had been proposed by Goru. A toast to their murders? wondered Mrs. Pollifax.

"I don't like this," Colin said in a low voice.

Impatiently Dr. Belleaux drained the jug, then threw it to the ground and spoke sharply to Goru. The gypsy, sipping his drink like a connoisseur, smiled back and smacked his lips.

Dr. Belleaux seized the knife from Goru's hand. "*Budala*—Enough delay!" he snarled, and turned to Mrs. Pollifax. Looking down at her in cold fury, he lifted the knife for its thrust into her heart. Behind him no one stirred, and Mrs. Pollifax realized the gypsies were not going to stop him. Dr. Belleaux's livid face came close and she gasped, bracing herself against his blow, and then she gasped again as he continued a headlong descent and pitched on the ground beside her. He twitched once and then was still.

"THEY are not dead," Anyeta explained to Colin and Mrs. Pollifax. "We would be fools to kill a *gorgio*; the police are our enemies everywhere, like fleas forever on our backs."

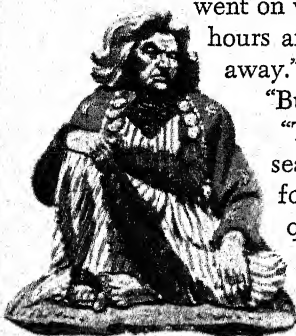
Anyeta had been carried to a wagon, where she sat on a cushion giving orders; her tent had been struck and the two campfires extinguished and raked. Horses were being harnessed, and the three casualties of the night—Magda, Sandor and Ramsey—had already been placed in one of the wagons, still unconscious.

"We have our own drugs; they are herbs as old as time," Anyetta went on with a smile. "The three men will sleep for eight hours and wake up refreshed. By then we must be far away."

"But where did your men carry them?" asked Colin.

"To the plane; they have been strapped into the seats. They will make a peaceful picture when found. Now it is time to ask you an important question: What do you plan to do with Magda?"

Mrs. Pollifax explained their hopes that Magda might be alert enough to be placed on the Friday plane to Kayseri.



"Magda has passport?"

"She has passport, ticket, money and clothes."

Anyeta smiled broadly. "Not money." She shook her head. "Yule!" One of the youths who had robbed Mrs. Pollifax ran over and brought out the wad of bills. "He is very skillful; we are proud of him," Anyeta told Mrs. Pollifax. "But of course we do not steal from friends. Count it." She affectionately boxed his ears and he ran off to help with the loading. "So. You wish to take Magda to Kayseri. That is good—we head in that direction. What is more difficult is a place to hide. You say Friday?"

"Yes. It must be Thursday by now. The plane leaves Friday morning at eight. The next plane is not until Monday."

Anyeta nodded. "A place for us all to wait safely, then, during the daylight hours today. Yes, I know of one, but far—we must go straight as the eagle flies toward the rock country near Urgüp. From there it will take only hours to walk or ride to Kayseri, and it will be dark again when the time comes to get her to the airport." A shrill whistle broke the silence. "We are ready to go," Anyeta said. "We go across country, avoiding all roads."

Mrs. Pollifax took leave of her and hurried to the wagon, driven by Yule, in which her friends lay. Colin climbed into the van—he was to drive it a few miles and leave it hidden. From the lead wagon in which Anyeta and Goru rode there came a shout, and the six wagons moved into the night.

THERE WAS no tarpaulin over the wagon in which Mrs. Pollifax rode, and she awoke to feel cool air on her cheeks. Magda was beginning to stir, to fling out a hand and murmur unintelligible words. The silhouette of dark curly hair beside her was Dmitri. Colin drove the van in low gear behind them while his uncle snored peacefully on the wagon floor, sharing a blanket with Sandor, who had also slipped into exhausted sleep.

Suddenly Magda called out, sharply, and Dmitri leaned over her. "It's really you, Dmitri?" she said in a wondering voice.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Pollifax. "I believe it's morning!"

Magda began to laugh. "And you, too?" She reached for Mrs. Pollifax's hand. "Again you have rescued me. And found Dmitri!"

"I had a great deal of help," admitted Mrs. Pollifax. "Colin and Sandor, Colin's uncle, a girl named Sabahat and your gypsies." Magda's laughter turned into tears. "It's all right, Dmitri, let her cry." Mrs. Pollifax patted his shoulder. "She'll feel better for it."

Gradually Magda's tears subsided and she slept. She would need that sleep if she was to gain enough strength to board a plane within twenty-four hours—and that, thought Mrs. Pollifax, was the one thing that mattered now. The seriousness of her own plight had dimmed once she had met Dmitri—and then the boy had pulled the Evil Eye from under his ragged shirt. It was now obvious that what was sealed inside that innocent-looking blue stone was of vital significance to the Communists. Only after this had been recovered would Magda be silenced.

As to what the stone contained—transcripts of terribly secret Russian conversations, plans that would matter a great deal to NATO, or to future nuclear pacts—Mrs. Pollifax could only guess. Somehow it and Magda had to be gotten out of Turkey. Perhaps Colin could look after Dmitri until the child had acquired the necessary papers to travel. She had no illusions as to what lay in store for herself, and jail would be no place for the boy.

The caravan halted, and Goru directed the van off the road. Several minutes later Colin, carrying the van's battery, jumped into the wagon beside Mrs. Pollifax. "Good Lord, what terrain!" he said. "Thought I'd have to abandon her long before this!"

"Where did you leave the van?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"There's a deserted village in there—I rammed the truck inside one of the buildings that still has a roof." He glanced up at the sky. "It's just past three now; it'll be dawn in an hour or so, and there's that damn helicopter to worry about."

They dozed uncomfortably for another hour. When Mrs. Pollifax opened her eyes again Magda was awake, propped up against the side of the wagon with one hand resting on Dmitri, who had fallen asleep with his head in her lap. The sun was rising with an explosion of colors that swept the sky like a wash of watercolor. Mrs. Pollifax saw that Magda's eyes were fastened on Colin's sleeping uncle. Seeing Mrs. Pollifax sit up, Magda said with a puzzled frown, "This man here—I do not understand where he came

from. He so much resembles someone I once knew—someone I've not seen in twenty-five years at least. That same beak of a nose—"

Mrs. Pollifax looked at Uncle Hu buried in his blanket. "His nose is all one can *see*. Is the man he reminds you of a good sort?"

Magda nodded. "I have loved only two men. There was my first husband, Philippe—they called him the rich French playboy but it was the big act with him because he was an agent for the French government. We had one year together before he was murdered."

"By whom?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

"They were called Reds then," said Magda. "They arranged it to appear I had done their work. He was shot with my small pistol, with my fingerprints on it, and there had been arranged false evidence of a lover." She shrugged. "I would have preferred to kill myself but I was expecting a child, and I already worked for my husband's people. I took my problem to French Intelligence."

"So that's when you became a double agent."

"Yes. At least until World War Two I worked also with America and England." Her lips curved ruefully. "One does not expect to love a second time. I did not believe I had the heart left." Magda sighed. "It was only an encounter; it was all it could mean with me because by then I was vulnerable, my daughter a hostage growing up in Russia." She frowned. "I have learned that life assumes a pattern—call it karma. At every turning point in my life I am always thrust back into this work, as if by a firm hand. It has not been my karma to be either wife or mother for long."

Mrs. Pollifax said, "Perhaps it is now. As I understand karma there are debts to be paid, but if one manages them well there comes a time when one moves to a new level, a different karma."

"You speak as if you feel this," said Magda curiously.

Mrs. Pollifax laughed. "I can only tell you that after years of quiet family life I have entered a very dangerous profession. It's as if the page of a book had been abruptly turned by the wind. Coincidence? It feels more than that. Perhaps I enter your kind of life just as you leave it for something else."

"I could hope this for me," said Magda soberly.

"Do keep hoping," said Mrs. Pollifax, her gaze returning to Hu Ramsey.

IT WAS GROWING dangerously light when a shout came from a wagon up ahead. Goru stood up and pointed, and Mrs. Pollifax understood that they were reaching their destination. A high cliff rose sharply on their right, with rubble spilling down from it like lava, forming a hill. Mrs. Pollifax saw that the hill was honey-combed with caves, holes and the ruins of abandoned buildings. The wagons ahead had already begun to turn and head up through the debris in a circling, ascending line. "What a wonderful hiding place!" said Mrs. Pollifax.

The first wagon reached the summit, and Goru climbed out, looking small and doll-like against the great height of the wall behind him, and separated from the rest of them by the mountain of rubble. Their own wagon was lurching and slipping now as it followed the rock-strewn path toward the top. Mrs. Pollifax clung to the sides and prayed. They climbed higher and higher until Goru came into sight, suddenly his own size again. They had reached the top of the rubble, with the cliff above them.

Close to the cliff wall a primitive, washed-out road curved up and down behind the houses that had once been built into the hill. Along this avenue the wagons had stopped, each beside a ruin that still boasted a roof or half roof, while the men dug out rocks to make room for the wagons inside. One by one the wagons backed out of view, until theirs was the only one exposed. Yule was shouldering aside rocks and Colin jumped down to help. Behind her Mrs. Pollifax heard a startled voice say, "Wotthehell!"

"Sandor," she murmured, smiling, and turned.

Sandor was sitting erect rubbing his head but his eyes were on Magda and Hu Ramsey. Mrs. Pollifax saw that these two were both awake and staring at each other with astonishment.

Colin's uncle said abruptly, "You're thinner. You never did care sufficiently about meals—if you'd married me I should have insisted upon your eating. I've felt damnably juvenile not marrying all these years, but there's simply been no one to equal you. Why didn't you marry me?"

"I had a daughter in Russia."

"You could have told me, couldn't you?"

"Never," she said fondly. "You know you would have charged

the Kremlin, Hu, demanding she be brought to England—you would have gotten your head chopped off.”

At that moment someone shouted, and Goru came running toward them. Ramsey spoke to him in Turkish and looked appalled. “It’s the plane!” he shouted. “Get the wagon hidden! There’s a plane on the horizon heading this way!”

9

TWO MEN appeared and took away the horse, while five more lifted the wagon bodily over a stone wall and into a cellar. The wagon sustained only one casualty—a wheel fell off.

Their hiding place was not unpleasant. The morning sun fell through the ruined floor in latticework pattern. There were stone walls on three sides of them and half a roof overhead, and from the shadows Mrs. Pollifax had a breathtaking panoramic view.

She could see the helicopter glide slowly across the valley in the oddly tipsy fashion that to her confounded all laws of air flight; it drew nearer, disappeared behind the cliff and then suddenly roared down over their heads. For a full moment it hung suspended over them, searching like a bird of prey for one telltale slip. It was frightening. Then it lifted and began to beat its way slowly down to the other end of the cliff.

Magda said suddenly, angrily, “I cannot take a plane tomorrow morning and leave Dmitri to this. Never.”

Mrs. Pollifax said firmly, “Yes, it’s time to make plans. Let’s go and find Anyeta.”

They formed a circle inside the cave in which Anyeta had taken refuge. “We move at dark,” Anyeta said, “about nine thirty to-night. It will be necessary to move slowly because the way is not familiar. Goru does not know where the airport is at Kayseri.”

“I know it’s to the west of the town—on this side of it,” said Hu Ramsey. “Look here, if I went back and got the van—”

“I used up nearly all of the gas last night,” said Colin. “I’d calculate there’s enough for about ten miles.”

“Damn,” said Uncle Hu. “Where’s the nearest petrol station?”

"Nearest to the van?" said Colin. "Kirşehir definitely. But if you're thinking of getting Magda to the airport in it, remember someone's bound to stop you as they did at Yozgat. And if you had Magda and Mrs. Pollifax with you—" Colin shook his head.

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. "He's quite right. Magda *must* get to the airport by wagon; the van's too conspicuous."

Magda looked pensive. "I've no reservation for the eight o'clock flight, nor for the London flight. What if there is no room?"

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. "We must organize this very carefully."

"Gung ho and all that," suggested Colin, grinning.

"Exactly. Goru, you say you don't know where the airport is. Someone must find it—now, while it's daylight."

Anyeta translated this to Goru, who replied. "He says he will go himself," she told them. "He will take a horse and find the best route for the wagons, also."

"There's another problem," Mrs. Pollifax went on. "Magda wants to know that Dmitri will not be involved in this. She also needs a flight reservation. Mr. Ramsey, if you could take Dmitri with you and reach your van today, then you could drive it to Kirşehir for gas, and telephone the airport for a reservation through to London for Alice Dexter White. If the police should stop the van you'd have with you only a small boy, picked up on the road. You've already been checked out at Yozgat—it's possible you wouldn't be taken to jail again. You could then drive on to Ankara."

"Quite right," Ramsey said, though he looked unhappy about leaving Magda.

"You would do that?" Magda said hopefully. "Hu, I cannot tell you how grateful I would be."

"Of course I can do it," he said crisply. "Dmitri, you'll try me out next as a companion?"

"Must?" he said in a dispirited voice to Magda. She spoke to him in Russian and he listened gravely. "*Da*," he told Ramsey, nodding. "I go. I am—how you say—gung ho?"

"Good boy," Ramsey said, ruffling his hair.

"You will need a horse and a guide," Anyeta told him. "Yule will go—he knows where the van is hidden—and he can bring the horse back before night. Anything else?"

They all leaned over the map to pinpoint their present location, the best route to Kirşehir for Ramsey and the precise area of the Kayseri airport. "Don't head south," Uncle Hu warned Goru. "The police have a station here"—he pointed—"at Incesu."

Goru nodded and stood up. "*Allaha ismarladik*," he said.

"*Güle, güle*" (Good luck), said Uncle Hu, shaking his hand.

"Magda will need sleep and food today," Mrs. Pollifax told Anyeta. "Tonight I'll put her in my American clothes, which she can wear under her Turkish ones until she reaches the airport." Is there anything else? she wondered. Yes. "She ought to have a proper suitcase," said Mrs. Pollifax.

Uncle Hu said, "I have one in the van—Yule can bring it back tonight. It's old and battered but it's definitely Bond Street."

Anyeta produced a pair of crutches and joined them as they walked outside to see the horses saddled. She called out to Goru, and he nodded and waved.

Uncle Hu turned to Magda. "Be careful," he said. "It's not easy to leave you when I've just found you. You'll wait for me and Dmitri in Scotland as we arranged?"

Magda nodded. "Yes, I will."

He held her for a moment silently and then turned to Dmitri. "Well, Dmitri? We begin a long journey, you and I."

For a moment Dmitri and Magda clung to each other, and then he removed the Evil Eye from around his neck and placed it around his grandmother's. "Now is yours to guard," he said.

One of the men stationed on the cliffside shouted down to Anyeta. "He says there is no plane; it is time you go quickly."

Lifting Dmitri to the saddle of his horse, Ramsey got up behind him and said firmly, "We mustn't keep Yule waiting. Off we go, Dmitri. Gung ho, what?"

When they had disappeared along the cliff Mrs. Pollifax and Colin seated themselves on a crumbling wall. "Tomorrow at this time . . ." she began. She shook her head. "It's the waiting, the not knowing." She stared across the valley, her eyes narrowed against the brilliance of sun on whitened rock. "I love this part of the country," she said. "I had thought Turkey so dark—"

"Its history is dark."

"But look at it—everything sunbaked, and this blue sky and clumps of green the color of jade. I do wish I were an artist."

Collin nodded. "I intend to spend this endless day of ours shooting film, and there's something I can do to pay Uncle Hu back for his kindnesses. In all his years in this country he's never been able to catch more than a passing shot of the gypsies from his car. At last he has the opportunity to make friends with them, and he's off on an errand of mercy. I'm going to ask Anyeta if I can poke around filming her gypsies today."

"I'll come with you," said Mrs. Pollifax.

At midmorning they ate warmed-over *domatesli pilav*, heated by Anyeta on a small, almost smokeless charcoal brazier. The horses were fed. Sandor took over the mending of the damaged wagon wheel and Colin roamed ubiquitously with his camera, popping in and out of cellars, filming the gypsy children at their play and the women at work.

The helicopter did not return, but twice a small plane flew over, sending everyone into hiding. "Police, I think," said Colin, squinting up through holes in the roof, and Anyeta sent out orders to double the lookouts posted on the cliff.

"She is a queen, you know—literally," Magda said during a moment when Anyeta ventured out on crutches to oversee the wagon's mending. "It is she who holds all the people together."

"Queen of the gypsies!" mused Mrs. Pollifax. "She comes from Bulgaria?"

"Oh no!" Magda said. "Anyeta's roots are in Rumania. From there the gypsies wander freely into Yugoslavia over the mountains, and from there into Italy or western Germany."

"How did she lose the use of her legs—polio?"

Magda shook her head. "Not even I can discover that! But it is said that her clairvoyant powers tripled when she lost the ability to walk—as if all her strength went to this gift for the psychic. She is astonishing. When I first met her in Budapest many years ago, in a café, she was wearing pearls and diamonds. Is this not amazing? Perhaps you have heard of — — —?" She mentioned the name of a European concert violinist.

"Indeed I have," said Mrs. Pollifax. "I heard him play years ago in Carnegie Hall on one of his few American tours."

Magda nodded. "That was Anyeta's husband. He was half gypsy, but she is *all* gypsy, and grew sick from the *gorgio's* life. I hear that she nearly died. She had to come back to her people."

"To this," said Mrs. Pollifax reflectively, looking out at the sun and the white rocks. "I can barely understand. Two days ago I wouldn't have understood at all."

Later Magda slept, and seeing Anyeta watch her, Mrs. Pollifax said, "Does your gift for clairvoyance tell you anything?"

Anyeta said reluctantly, "I get no picture of Magda on a plane. Something intrudes. I am uneasy. . . ."

NIGHT came swiftly, like a blanket tossed over the plateau. Yule had returned leading the spare horse. Yes, the Englishman and Dmitri had reached the van in midafternoon and Yule had seen the battery put in and the van leave; he was sure the two had reached the Kirşehir road successfully. Goru did not get back until dark; he had avoided the many police patrolling the roads and discovered the airport. He had also found a way through the rock country that would not cross any major roads. Mrs. Pollifax guessed that he would have made a wonderful general.

Magda now wore Mrs. Pollifax's suit and blouse under her Turkish costume. Mrs. Pollifax gave her passport and money. "In case we are separated," she said, remembering Anyeta's uneasiness.

They moved out a little after ten o'clock, across the valley into the shadows of Topuz Dagi, the peak that guarded the eastern perimeter. The sky was brighter tonight. "The moon must already be rising behind that mountain range," Colin said.

"How far is it to Kayseri in miles?" asked Mrs. Pollifax.

He shook his head. "Too far for wagons moving this slowly; perhaps Goru plans to camp along the way and continue on horseback."

Magda said, "Trust Goru. He can be very cunning." She turned to Mrs. Pollifax. "You have already trusted me—you have not asked why I go to Scotland."

Mrs. Pollifax laughed. "I knew you would explain if you chose!"

Magda nodded. "Hu has a hunting lodge there. If I succeed in getting to London I will send one cable to Washington from the airport and then I shall disappear again. You understand I shall be very stubborn until Dmitri is allowed to join me."

Mrs. Pollifax considered this. She supposed that one small boy could very easily be overlooked by governments, and that even Carstairs could be rendered impotent by a government. "Yes, I understand," she said. "I won't ask for the address."

"Thank you."

The radiance of the hidden moon gave an almost Biblical quality to the procession of primitive wagons moving across the harsh countryside. They jolted and bounced and creaked. Around two o'clock they stopped, and bread and jugs of water were distributed while Goru walked down the line checking wheels and axles. No one spoke above a whisper and the line moved on again soon. It was four o'clock in the morning when Goru's scouts passed word that they were being followed by a man on horseback.

"It could be Sebastien," Colin said.

"Yes, it could," Mrs. Pollifax said, doubtfully.

"One person on horseback is scarcely a threat to some thirty gypsies," Colin pointed out. "Why doesn't Goru stop and find out who it is?" He jumped down. "I'll walk ahead and ask."

He was back several minutes later, frowning. "Whoever it is stays some distance behind us. Goru says there isn't time to stop; it's half past four and the important thing is getting Magda to the airport before eight."

"Quite so," Mrs. Pollifax said with feeling.

But uneasiness permeated the caravan. The sky was whitening. The line moved faster. They were leaving the volcanic country and returning to the dusty plateau. Somewhere between them and the foothills of the distant mountains lay Kayseri and the airport.

At a few minutes after five Goru lifted his hand and called out a sharp command. The sound was startling after so many hours of caution. In the east the sky had turned into mother-of-pearl and the tip of an orange sun was lifting itself over the mountains. Two men in uniform rode up from the north.

"Rural police," Colin said to Mrs. Pollifax.

The men looked pleasant, relaxed. They exchanged a few words with Goru and then one man rode slowly up and down the line, looking into the faces of the gypsies and glancing into the wagons. He rode back and the three-way conversation continued. Goru nodded and called out to the gypsies. Casually Sandor strolled back from Anyeta's wagon, in which he was riding. "They wish to see all identity cards," he said.

"This will take a long time!" said Mrs. Pollifax despairingly.

"Why can't we just tie them up and take them along?" asked Colin irritably. "I still have Stefan's pistol!"

Sandor grinned. "What a lion you are! You wish them to know we have something to hide? When a police sees gypsies he either spits and rides on, or stops to see what they have stolen today."

They handed Sandor their cards and he carried them up to the police.

There followed an interminable wait, tense with anxiety, lest the police asked to question each gypsy personally. The police talked on and on to Goru and Anyeta, while one of them shuffled through the pile of thirty cards. Once they laughed—"Are they telling jokes?" whispered Colin indignantly—and then at last the papers were handed back, the wagons were waved ahead and the two policemen galloped off. But the caravan had been stopped for more than forty-five minutes, and it was now nearly six.

They were tired, hungry and dusty. Half an hour later they skirted a small village, steaming in the early morning sun. Sandor walked back to them with a new message. "Goru wishes the wagons to go two by two; this wagon will move next to his."

As they drew abreast of Anyeta and Goru, Goru stood up and tossed a club to Yule across the wagons. Anyeta leaned over and said, "You must stay very close to Magda now." There was mute warning in her eyes for Mrs. Pollifax. "You understand?"

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. What did they fear? But then she heard the helicopter. It came darting over the hill ahead of them, delicate, yet monstrous, like a blown-up metallic dragonfly.

"So we are to meet the good doctor again," said Colin grimly.

Mrs. Pollifax looked around her. Her skin prickled uneasily. Behind them lay vineyards; ahead, a village graveyard populated

a gently sloping hill. Into this the helicopter descended, sending out clouds of dust.

Mrs. Pollifax coughed and drew her shawl over her nose and eyes. Through a slit in the shawl she saw the helicopter resting lightly on the ground some forty yards away, its blades whirring. "Why the devil doesn't he turn that blasted machine off!" cried Colin, jumping down. "Get behind the wagon or you'll be blinded by the dust!" He held out a hand to Magda and Mrs. Pollifax.

The door of the helicopter opened and Dr. Belleaux and Stefan emerged with pistols. From the graveyard on the hill a gun was fired, and now Mrs. Pollifax understood: Dr. Belleaux had at last joined forces with the Turkish police.

"*Mon dieu!*" cried Magda, as the graveyard came to life and the police began pouring down the hill.

But they were still some distance away, and Mrs. Pollifax realized why Dr. Belleaux had left the helicopter engine running: he was facing the gypsies for these few minutes with only his gun and Stefan's. Goru too had seen this, and he suddenly appeared from behind the plane. With a club he knocked the gun from Dr. Belleaux's hand. Stefan whirled on him as other gypsies swept forward to surround them. Yule was knocked flat—Stefan was not an incompetent bodyguard—and a club flew into the air.

"Hide in the vineyard!" shouted Anyeta from her wagon.

"She's right—hurry!" cried Colin.

But Mrs. Pollifax shook her head. There was no future for them hiding in a vineyard. The police would be here in a minute or two and Magda would never reach her eight-o'clock plane to freedom. Instead Mrs. Pollifax was staring at the helicopter, momentarily abandoned. "Colin, can you fly a helicopter?" she said.

He gaped at her. "Good Lord, no!"

"There's no other way," Mrs. Pollifax said firmly, and began to run, dragging Magda with her.

Colin looked helplessly around him, then followed the two fleeing women at breakneck speed through the melee of fistfighters to the helicopter. Mrs. Pollifax boosted Magda inside, pulled herself up and turned to give Colin a hand. Then the police fired a shot, and Colin clutched his arm.

"Go!" Colin shouted. "Go!"

"Of course not!" cried Mrs. Pollifax, clinging to his hand and dragging him bodily inside. "Bolt the doors!" she told Magda.

"Can you drive a helicopter?" asked Magda, bolting the doors.

Mrs. Pollifax snapped, "Of course not!" and sat down at the controls. There were two levers, one jutting up from the floor, the other running horizontally from behind the seat. She grasped the latter, closed her eyes, and pulled. The helicopter gave a little jump. Heartened, she grasped the other lever and thrust it forward and they hovered several feet from the ground, scattering the policemen around the plane. Mrs. Pollifax tackled the levers more sternly, and with a leap they moved sideways, threatening to level gypsies as well as police. Courage, Emily, she told herself, and returned to the first lever—and suddenly they were sailing over the crowd. "Well!" she gasped with satisfaction, and only wished she could remember what she had done.

"Good Lord, we're up," said Colin weakly.

"You're hurt," Magda told him. "Lie down!"

"Lie down?" Colin said. "When I've survived being shot only to be abducted in a helicopter flown by a madwoman?"

"Ssh—I'm driving this thing. Now where's the airport?" They were flying at low level—in jumps, rather like a kangaroo—while Mrs. Pollifax tested the levers, trying to find out which took them up, and which forward and sideways.

"Look out!" screamed Magda as they narrowly avoided a tree.

The helicopter leaped, skimmed across a field almost on its side, lifted and settled at a more conservative altitude. "I wish you would speak more quietly," Mrs. Pollifax said. "When you shout in my ear I jump and so does the plane."

"Look—there's a highway!" Magda gasped.

"Good—we'll follow it," said Mrs. Pollifax. "What time is it?"

Colin scowled at his watch. "Seven fifteen."

Magda said, "You're too low, Mrs. Pollifax; we're going to hit the cars." Forgetting to be quiet she screamed, "Look out!"

The plane jumped. Cars scattered to left and to right. Mrs. Pollifax tugged at the first lever and they zoomed heavenward. Shakily she said, "We must find the airport."

"I'm looking, believe me," said Magda.

They flew over Kayseri—it had to be Kayseri—and barely missed the top of a minaret. "Up!" screamed Magda.

"They build them too high!" shouted Mrs. Pollifax, pulling the wrong lever and sending them crablike back to the minaret. Furiously she tugged at the lever and they went skyward again.

"I see the airport!" cried Magda triumphantly, and there it was, a gloriously clear space a mile or two away with runways and a control tower. "Watch those buildings! We're hovering."

"I know we're hovering," cried Mrs. Pollifax, "but I can't seem to—" They shot abruptly forward, dropped low, then suddenly lower; the motor died and they came to rest on the ground. "I think we just ran out of gas," said Mrs. Pollifax. "Where are we?"

Magda said calmly, "We've just landed in Kayseri's public square, and barely missed a policeman directing traffic."

Mrs. Pollifax nodded and opened her eyes. "Yes, I see him." She sighed. "A great many people seem to be looking at us, too."

From the floor of the helicopter Colin said, "Then get moving! Run! Grab a taxi! Leave the rest to me!"

He was quite right, of course. Mrs. Pollifax opened the door next to her, slid out, extended a hand to Magda and they jumped down. For just a moment they stood hand in hand, blinking a little at the gathering crowd, then with pleasant smiles they made their way to the sidewalk, allowed the crowd to stream past them and casually slipped down a side street to look for a taxi.

"Head for the ladies' room," Mrs. Pollifax told Magda in the taxi. "Don't wait for me—two of us might draw attention. Go in, peel off your Turkish clothes and bundle them into a wastebasket."

It was precisely 7:35 when they entered the air terminal, and Magda escaped into the ladies' room. Ten minutes later a thin, erect and distinguished-looking woman emerged, wearing a navy knit suit. Mrs. Pollifax smiled approvingly from a quiet corner. Magda walked to the flight desk and with exquisite aplomb drew out bills from the shawl she carried over one arm. Several minutes later at Passport Control she held out her passport with confidence. The official took it, looked deeply into Magda's face, stamped the passport and returned it.



Not until she reached the door did Magda turn, her glance sweeping the lobby. When she saw Mrs. Pollifax in her baggy pants her mouth curved slightly. They exchanged a long expressionless glance and then almost imperceptibly Magda lifted one hand in a gesture that could have been a wave or a salute.

It was seven fifty-five. Mrs. Pollifax moved to the window and watched Magda board the plane, saw the stairs removed, the door closed, watched the plane begin to taxi away. It stopped at the beginning of the long runway. "Go, go, go," whispered Mrs. Pollifax. The plane hesitated, and then began to move again. As its wheels lifted, Mrs. Pollifax slowly expelled her breath, and there were tears in her eyes. Magda was airborne.

She turned and walked the length of the terminal. She did not falter at the sight of police hurrying inside. One of the policemen saw her and stepped forward. "Mrs. Pollifax?" he said.

She sighed and nodded. Behind him she saw Dr. Belleaux stepping out of a car. He wore a strip of adhesive across one cheek, but aside from this he looked his usual cool, authoritative self.

"You are wanted for questioning in the murder of Henry Miles," the officer said. "Come with us, please."



10

HER STONE CELL was small and unpleasant. In fact it smelled. It had been cold and damp when she entered it at half past eight, and as the day progressed it became damp and hot with a sickly jungle humidity. There was a jug of water in one corner but no one brought food; no one came near her at all, and this alarmed her because she had expected to tell her story to the police at once. Now she had no idea of what was happening, or of how much damage Dr. Belleaux might be doing. Was Magda still on the plane? Or had she been intercepted at Ankara or Istanbul? The thought appalled her. If only *someone* would come! It was

maddening to sit here charged with such a sad and truthless crime when she had news so explosive, and worries so alarming.

She began to pace her cell, staring in exasperation at the tiny high window and listening by the door for footsteps outside. There was nothing. The day grew hotter and the walls began literally to sweat. Just in case her cell was wired she took to saying in a clear voice every thirty minutes, "I must talk to someone in charge; I have information for the Turkish government." No one came, no one listened; there was only heat and silence. Mrs. Pollifax ceased pacing and wearily sat down on the metal bunk.

She had completely lost track of time when the door suddenly opened. The light had grown dimmer—it must be late afternoon, she guessed—and it was difficult to see the man, who said briskly, "I am so sorry, Mrs. Pollifax! There has been no time to interview you, and you have had a long wait indeed. You will come with me please to a"—he sniffed—"more agreeable place."

"Yes," she said in a dispirited voice.

He led her down a long, dungeonlike corridor and up worn stairs to a more civilized hall. "In here, please," he said, and ushered her into an office. There was sunshine in the room, as well as fresh air.

She sat down in a leather chair beside the desk and now that her eyes were becoming accustomed to the light she examined the man with surprise. "We've met before," she said abruptly.

"Yes," he said, sitting down and smiling pleasantly at her. "In Istanbul, at Central Headquarters. I am Mr. Piskopos."

"Of course," she said. "May I ask how Mr. Ramsey is? Mr. Colin Ramsey."

"Oh yes, the young man found in the helicopter." He nodded. "Just a flesh wound, quite negligible."

"Has he—uh—spoken with you?"

Mr. Piskopos smiled. "Now what would he speak to me about, Mrs. Pollifax, eh?" He flicked on the switch of a tape recorder. "Have some figs," he said, holding out a polished wooden bowl. "I must question you on many matters. Food will be brought you soon, but you must be very hungry."

"Thank you." She accepted a fig and held it—it was very sticky.

She realized that after all these hours of waiting to speak to someone she no longer had any idea of what to say. She could not think of any questions that might not provoke graver dangers for Magda, or Dmitri, or Colin and his uncle, or the gypsies, nor of any answers that would not betray her connection with Mr. Carstairs.

"But let us get on with this," said Mr. Piskopos. "I am a member of the Turkish Intelligence, Mrs. Pollifax, so you may speak frankly with me. You are an American agent, are you not?"

"You flatter me, Mr. Piskopos. I am an American tourist."

He nodded. "Then let us not pursue *that* detail any further."

"Thank you," she said with dignity. "Then may I ask what charges you plan to place against me."

"Any charges would be purely academic since your trial has already taken place," he said flatly.

"My trial?" she cried. "Without me?"

He nodded. "Actually, Mrs. Pollifax, a hearing has been held—it took a number of hours, which is why I am so late—and you were quite fairly represented by Lieutenant Cevdet Suleiman."

She said indignantly, "I've never met a Lieutenant Suleiman so I fail to see how he could represent me. This is doubtless a recommendation of Dr. Belleaux?"

Mr. Piskopos beamed. "It is interesting that you mention Dr. Belleaux. Suppose you tell me how you happen to know him."

"What time is it?"

"Five o'clock." He showed her his wristwatch.

Mrs. Pollifax nodded. If it was five o'clock in the afternoon then Magda was either landing in London or stalled hopelessly in Istanbul. "Very well," she said, and began to speak of her arrival in Istanbul to help a friend who had appealed to her for aid by cablegram. "Her name," she said, "was Magda Ferenci-Sabo."

If Mr. Piskopos was startled he did not show it; his eyes remained fixed inscrutably on the desk blotter. Encouraged, Mrs. Pollifax plunged ahead to describe the events of the past four days. When she had finished Mr. Piskopos flicked off the tape recorder.

"Thank you, Mrs. Pollifax," he said simply.

She found this annoyingly casual. She said, "You don't believe what I've said about Dr. Belleaux?"

He looked up, surprised. "Oh yes. Perhaps I should tell you that Dr. Belleaux is also in this prison—but not as a guest of our police. He was booked only an hour after you arrived, and he is here as a prisoner charged with espionage and treason." He smiled wryly. "At the hearing it was decided—because of your work in exposing Dr. Belleaux—that Ferenci-Sabo be allowed to continue unmolested to London."

"Magda is safe?" gasped Mrs. Pollifax.

He said gravely, "We could have stopped her, but all of her information will be shared with my government, and in turn we have Dr. Belleaux, as Lieutenant Suleiman pointed out to us."

"This lieutenant—" began Mrs. Pollifax.

"However, for the safety of everyone concerned," continued Mr. Piskopos, "we have thought it best that if Alice Dexter White goes free, Magda Ferenci-Sabo must die." He drew a sheet of paper from under his blotter. "Perhaps you would be interested in the news release we have prepared for the wire services?"

Mrs. Pollifax glanced impatiently at a report of Magda Ferenci-Sabo's death. Piskopos was saying, "You will of course wish to send a cable of reassurance to Mr. Carstairs in Washington."

At hearing Carstairs' name spoken, Mrs. Pollifax nearly choked on the fig that she had at last begun to eat. "You know—about Mr. Carstairs?" she gasped.

Piskopos leaned back and smiled. "Obviously it is time that you met Lieutenant Suleiman," he said. "I must explain to you that he has been lately involved in following a man who entered Turkey illegally, Mrs. Pollifax, and who took a job as a valet with a noted gentleman in Istanbul. The name of the man is Stefan Mihailic, and the gentleman who gave him employment is Dr. Guillaume Belleaux."

Mrs. Pollifax's eyes widened in surprise. "Dr. Belleaux!"

"Which may explain to you," continued Mr. Piskopos, "how it was that Lieutenant Suleiman happened to be watching Dr. Belleaux's house last Monday night when two strangers rode up in a van containing a corpse, proceeded to enter Dr. Belleaux's house and to carry out a half-conscious woman! Without consulting his superiors Lieutenant Suleiman decided that he must follow you

The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax

in whatever conveyance he could put his hands on and discover what on earth you were up to. He had no idea who you or Ferenci-Sabo were until—alas—it was far too late.” Piskopos smiled. “He seems to have acquired the utmost respect for you, Mrs. Pollifax, a respect, I might add, which my government shares completely.” He leaned over and said into the intercom, “Send in Lieutenant Suleiman.”

“I simply don’t understand,” admitted Mrs. Pollifax.

Mr. Piskopos beamed reassuringly. “You will have plenty of time to understand. Lieutenant Suleiman has arranged a party for you all tonight in Ankara . . . for you, the young man Colin, Mr. Ramsey and Dmitri—who are in Ankara now—and I believe a pretty young woman from Yozgat was mentioned. But Lieutenant Suleiman will tell you more of this. Ah, Cevdet, come in!”

The door had opened. A figure in dazzling white linen stood there, a figure vaguely familiar and yet utterly strange to Mrs. Pollifax. Black hair. A thin stripe of a mustache across the upper lip. Dazzling white teeth. Broad shoulders. This was an incredibly handsome man. Then he moved, and Mrs. Pollifax started. Dimly she remembered thinking—was it only a few days ago?—that even if he shaved and bathed she would recognize him because of his vitality, that bounding step and wonderful zest for life.

“Sandor!” she cried.

Mr. Piskopos stood up and said with a smile, “I would like you to meet Lieutenant Cevdet Suleiman, Mrs. Pollifax, of Turkish Intelligence.”

Sandor laughed. “What the hell, eh, Mrs. Pollifax?” he said, and bounded forward to kiss her heartily on each cheek.

It was Saturday afternoon in Langley, Virginia, and in his office in the CIA building Carstairs had been staring at a number of exhibits on his desk.

There was a hat that had been airmailed to him from Istanbul, discovered by the police on Wednesday in a street bazaar in Ankara. It was a veritable garden of a hat bearing the label of Mrs.



Emily Pollifax of New Brunswick, New Jersey; but he had already known this: he had seen it himself on Mrs. Pollifax's head six days ago.

There was Bishop's memo from Pan American Airways stating that no Mrs. Emily Pollifax was aboard today's flight out of Istanbul for London.

There was the wire release carrying a bulletin that would be tomorrow morning's headline. Dated Kayseri, July 10, it reported that the body of a woman identified as Magda Ferenci-Sabo had been discovered by a shepherd that morning near Urgüp in central Turkey.

And there was the cable that Bishop had handed him only a moment ago, which Carstairs had just begun to read:

REGRET TO INFORM YOU MAGDA DEAD. ALICE DEXTER WHITE IN GOOD HEALTH AND RESUMING TRAVELS. PLEASE HAVE READY UPON ARRIVAL PASSPORT FOR DMITRI DEXTER WHITE AGE ELEVEN. DELAYING DEPARTURE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS FOR PARTY GIVEN MY HONOR ANKARA. HAVING WONDERFUL TIME. EMILY POLLIFAX

Carstairs read it again. "I don't believe it," he said.

Bishop chuckled. "It leaves out so much. Such as where she's been for almost a week, and who killed Henry, and how she lost her hat, not to mention her rescuing Ferenci-Sabo—"

Carstairs said incredulously, "How did she manage it? I thought she was dead. I thought they were both dead—"

"*O ye of little faith,*" said Bishop with a grin.

Carstairs shook his head unbelievably. "No word from Dr. Belleaux. Two agents already murdered. This hat turning up in Ankara of all places—and," he recalled, "her passport. How did she get clear across Turkey without a passport?"

Bishop's grin broadened. "What interests me at the moment is who's giving the party in Mrs. Pollifax's honor. The Turkish government, do you suppose?"

"Don't be an idiot," snapped Carstairs, and then as his glance fell on the cable he began to smile. "I'll amend that," he said. "Anything's possible."

The Amazing Mrs Pollifax

He read the cable a third time, and as it dawned upon him at last that Ferenci-Sabo and Pollifax were both safe—and he had lost a great deal of sleep over them the past several nights—he chuckled richly. “Bishop,” he said, “find out what twenty-four hours’ delay does to Mrs. Pollifax’s arrival. She was booked on Pan Am all the way, wasn’t she? I believe I’ll meet her plane personally on Monday.”

“Yes, sir. There’s one other matter, sir.”

“What’s that, Bishop?”

“May I come, too, sir?”

The Coincidences of Mrs. Pollifax

by John Falter

This is my second encounter with that delightfully improbable spy, Emily Pollifax. I first made her acquaintance when I did the illustrations for *The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax*, which was also her introduction to Reader’s Digest Condensed Books readers. That assignment led to a meeting with her author, Dorothy Gilman, in a somewhat “unexpected” way.



DOROTHY GILMAN

From the start I was enchanted with the *joie de vivre* and spirit that make Mrs. Pollifax go, and I began casting about for someone who could pose as a model for her. Although she is younger than Mrs. Pollifax, I finally chose Mary Seymour, a friend of my sister and brother-in-law, Sue and Bob Harvey. Through the Harveys, I arranged to go down from my home in Philadelphia to Mary and Ed Seymour’s beautiful farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and photograph Mary in all sorts of costumes in preparation for the final egg-tempera illustrations. We had great fun finding just the right flowered hat for Mrs. Pollifax, and when the job was done, my wife and I gave a victory dinner for the Seymours and the Harveys.

But we were by no means through with Mrs. Pollifax. At dinner, I was regaling the others with some of her adventures when Bob and Sue, who live in Morristown, New Jersey, looked puzzled, and Bob said: “That sounds like a book written by a woman who has just moved

into our neighborhood. She's written a story about a lady spy. But her name isn't Gilman—it's Mrs. Butters."

Intrigued, my sister did a little investigating and called in great glee a few days later to say that Mrs. Butters and Dorothy Gilman were indeed one and the same—the latter being her maiden, and her pen, name. Sue also said the Seymours were giving a party for what we had come to call "the whole Pollifax crew"—this time including the author—and that my wife and I were invited.

Down we all went to the farm, where I met Mrs. Pollifax's creator for the first time. I suppose we all tend to assume that an author resembles her heroine, and I was surprised to find Dorothy so young and attractive. Even more surprising was the discovery that she had been a student of my work back in the 1940s, when she was attending the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and I was doing covers for *The Saturday Evening Post*. She then unfolded a career almost as unexpected as Mrs. Pollifax's, for having started out as an art student, she suddenly switched to writing

Mr. Falter is a renowned American illustrator whose work is well known to readers of Condensed Books and to those of almost every major magazine

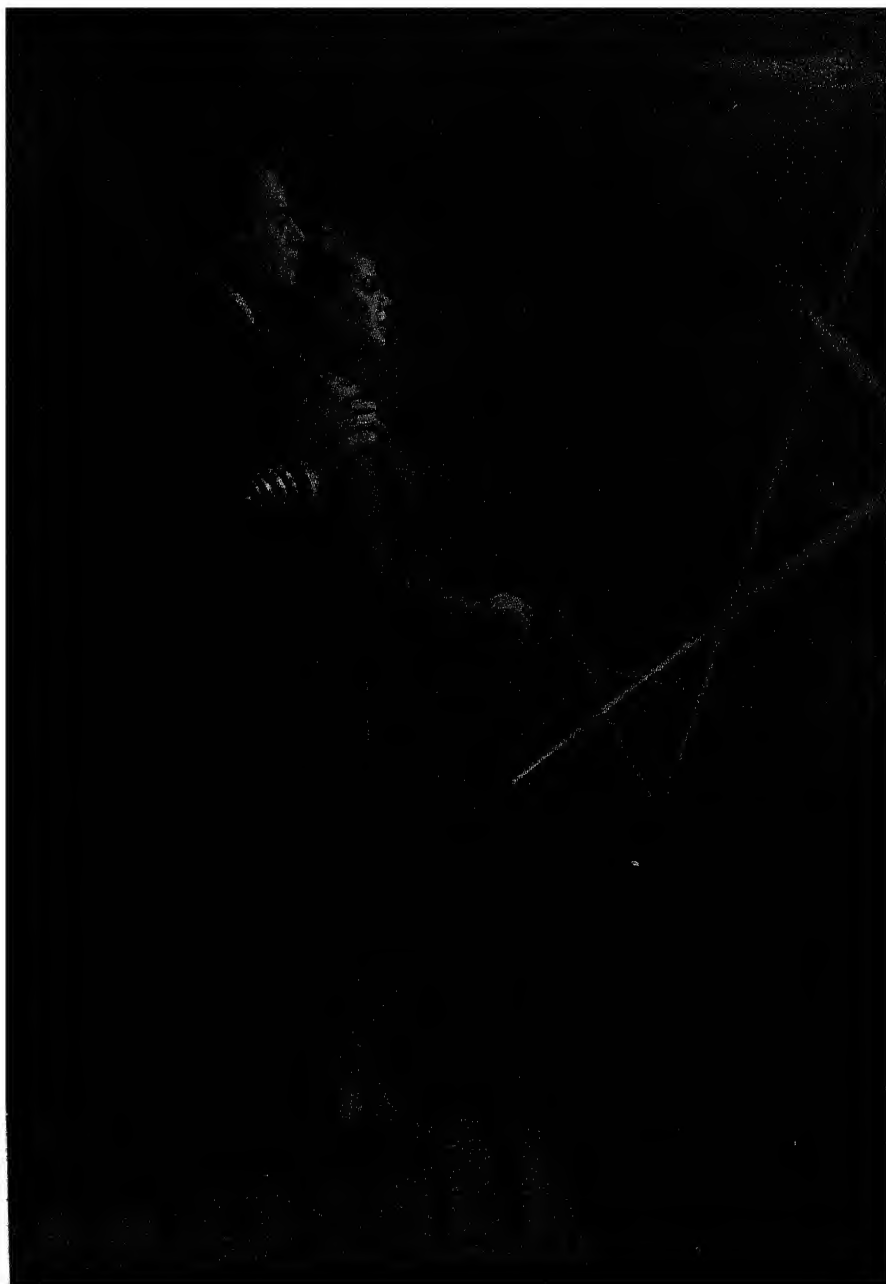


stories, which she had loved to do as a child. They caught on and she wrote a dozen teen-age novels, taking the jump into adult fiction with Mrs. Pollifax, and that success leading her, in turn, to many foreign travels, which show up as background in the Pollifax books.

I had brought along proofs of the set of illustrations I had done, and amid much laughing and joking as we passed them around, I was very happy to hear Dorothy say that I had caught Mrs. Pollifax's quality.

When Condensed Books decided to publish a second Mrs. Pollifax book, I was delighted to meet my old friend again. Of course I used Mary Seymour for the model, and she kindly transformed a silk jump suit into the Turkish pantaloons of the pictures. I like this second set of illustrations even more than the first, and often laughed out loud when I walked into my studio and found Emily Pollifax, with her typically American humor, waiting for me on the drawing board.

As we told Dorothy, there must be a little Pollifax in us all, for she really exists in our minds and we hope she goes on forever.



The Winds of War

A CONDENSATION OF THE NOVEL BY

Herman Wouk

author of *The Caine Mutiny*

The brilliant saga of an American
family caught in the storm of
World War Two

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT LAVIN

Commander Victor Henry did not relish his assignment, in the summer of 1939, as U.S. naval attaché in Hitler's Germany. "Pug" Henry was a battleship man, and pen-pushing in an embassy was not the way to the command he so badly wanted. Yet his skill at gathering intelligence brought him to the notice of the President, and, as it turned out, Franklin Roosevelt had his own plans for Pug. As World War II burst over Europe, Pug's special missions took him to the warring capitals of both sides and led to personal encounters with Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini, even Stalin. He saw the human factors behind the catastrophe; saw and felt, too, the stress of war on human relationships very close to home.

This is the story of Pug Henry and his family—of Rhoda, his beautiful but discontented wife, and their daughter and two sons—uprooted and tempered by the winds of war. Of the threats to Pug and Rhoda's marriage. Of the poignant love between young Byron Henry and the willful, irresistible Jewish girl, Natalie Jastrow, bravely trying to get her uncle out of Fascist Italy.

Through their lives it is also the story of the momentous events in which they found themselves involved, from the German march into Poland to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. And to give the German perspective on the war, Herman Wouk has created a Nazi military historian, Armin von Roon, whose postwar "memoirs" provide a fascinating running commentary on such crucial episodes as the fall of France, the Battle of Britain, and Hitler's onslaught against Russia.

It is Herman Wouk's genius to mix the real and the imaginary in a way that brings history vividly to life. And with it he tells a compelling human story that surpasses even the high drama of *The Caine Mutiny*.

1

COMMANDER Victor Henry rode a taxicab home from the Navy Building on Constitution Avenue in a gusty, gray March rainstorm that matched his mood. In his War Plans cubbyhole that afternoon he had received an unexpected word from on high which had probably blown his career to rags. Now he had to consult his wife about an urgent decision; yet he did not altogether trust her opinions.

At forty-five, Rhoda Henry remained a singularly attractive woman, but she was rather a crab. This colored her judgment, and it was a fault he found hard to forgive. She had married him with her eyes open. They had talked frankly about the drawbacks of the military life—the separations, the lack of a real home, the need to be humble to senior men's wives—but Rhoda had declared that none of them would trouble her. She loved him, and the navy was a career of honor. So she had said in 1915, when the World War was on and uniforms had a glow. This was 1939, and she had long since forgotten those words.

He had warned her that the climb through the system would be hard. He was not of a navy family—his father was in the California-redwood business—yet everyone in the navy who knew "Pug" Henry called him a comer. Until now his rise had been steady. His directness, his dash, his single-mindedness had gotten him from the Sonoma High School into the Naval Academy. The same char-

acteristics, coupled with humor and tenderness, had later won him his wife, though she was two inches taller than he, and though her prosperous parents had looked for a better match than a squat navy fullback from California, of no means or family.

Mundane details like a height difference had faded from sight. The real shadow on this couple was that wherever she was, Rhoda tended to fret—about the heat, or the cold, or servants, or shop clerks, or hairdressers—and Victor Henry detested whining. On the other hand, when her spirits were good she could be very sweet and agreeable. Also, she was two things Pug thought a wife should be: a seductive woman and an adroit homemaker. In all their married years, there had been few times when he had not desired her; and wherever they landed, Rhoda had provided clean, well-furnished rooms, fresh flowers, and appetizing food.

But heading home after a day's work, he never knew whether he would encounter Rhoda the charmer or Rhoda the crab. At a crucial moment like this, it could make a great difference. In her down moods, her judgments were snappish and often silly.

Coming into the house, he heard her singing. He found her in the living room arranging tall stalks of orange gladiolus in an ox-blood vase they'd bought in Manila. She was wearing a beige silky dress, and her dark hair fell in waves behind her ears, in the fashion of 1939. Her welcoming glance was affectionate and gay. Just to see her so made him feel better.

"Oh, HI there. Why on EARTH didn't you warn me Kip Tollever was coming? He sent these, and LUCKILY he called too. I was slopping around this house like a SCRUBWOMAN." Rhoda used the swooping high notes of smart Washington women. "He said he might be late. Let's have a short one, Pug, okay? The fixings are all there. I'm PARCHED."

Pug walked to the wheeled bar and began to mix martinis. "I asked him to stop by so I could talk to him. It's not a social visit."

"Oh? Am I supposed to make myself scarce?"

"No, no."

"Good. I like Kip. I was flabbergasted to hear his voice. I thought he was still stuck in Berlin."

"He's been detached."

The Author to the Reader

The Winds of War is fiction, and all the characters and adventures involving the Henry family are imaginary. But the history of the war in this romance is offered as accurate; the statistics, as reliable; the words and acts of the great personages, as either historical or derived from accounts of their words and deeds in similar situations. No work of this scope can be free of error, but readers will discern, it is hoped, an arduous effort to give a true and full picture of a great world battle. *World Empire Lost*, the military treatise by the Nazi general Armin von Roon, is of course an invention from start to finish. Still, it is offered as a professional view of the German side of the hill, reliable within the limits peculiar to such self-justifying military literature.

The theme and aim of *The Winds of War* can be found in a few words by the French Jew Julien Benda: "Peace, if it ever exists, will not be based on the fear of war but on the love of peace. It will not be the abstaining from an act, but the coming of a state of mind. In this sense the most insignificant writer can serve peace where the most powerful tribunals can do nothing."

—Herman Wouk

"So he told me. Who relieved him?"

"Nobody yet." Victor Henry handed her a cocktail. He sank into an armchair and drank, gloom enveloping him again.

Rhoda had taken in his bad humor. Pug held himself very straight except in moments of worry. He had entered the room hunched, and even in the armchair his shoulders were bent. Dark straight hair hung down his forehead. His charcoal slacks, brown sports jacket, and red bow tie were clothes for a man younger than forty-eight, but an athletic body enabled him to carry it off. Rhoda saw that he was worried.

He looked up at her. "You know that memorandum I wrote on battleships? Well, I got called down to the CNO's office."

"My God! To see Preble?"

"Preble himself." As Pug told her about his talk with the chief of naval operations, Rhoda's face took on a sullen look.

"Oh, I see. *That's* why you asked Kip over!"

"Exactly. What do you think about my taking this attaché job?"

"Since when do you have any choice?"

"He gave me the impression that I did. That I could go to a battlegewagon instead, as an exec."

"Good Lord, Pug, that's more like it!"

"You'd prefer that I go back to sea?"

"I'd prefer? What difference has that ever made?"

"All the same, I'd like to hear what you prefer."

Rhoda hesitated. "Well—naturally I'd adore going to Germany. It's the loveliest country in Europe. The people are so friendly. German was my major, you know, aeons ago."

"I know," Pug said with a wry smile. "You were very good at German." Some of the early hot moments of their honeymoon had occurred while they stumbled through Heine's love poetry.

Rhoda returned an arch glance. "Well, all right, you. All I mean is, if you must leave Washington— I suppose the Nazis are kind of ugly and ridiculous, but Germany's still wonderful, I'm told."

"No doubt we'd have a whirl. The question is whether two shore assignments in a row wouldn't be a total disaster."

"Oh, Pug, you'll get your four stripes, *and* a battleship command. My God, with your gunnery pennants, your letter of commendation— Pug, suppose CNO's right? If a war is about to pop, it would be an important job, wouldn't it?"

"Preble says the President wants top men in Berlin now as military attachés. Okay, I'll believe that. He also says it won't hurt my career. That's what I can't believe. First thing any selection board looks for in a man's record is lots of blue water."

"Pug, are you sure Kip won't stay to dinner? There's plenty of food. Warren's going to New York."

"No, Kip's off to a party at the German embassy. Why the hell is Warren going to New York? He's only been home three days."

"Ask him," Rhoda said. The slam of the front door and the quick firm steps were unmistakable Warren sounds.

"Hi." He came in waving a squash racket. In an old gray sweater and slacks, hair tousled and face glowing from exercise, he looked more like the lad who, on graduating from the Academy, had vanished from their lives.

Pug envied him the deep sunburn which bespoke a destroyer bridge and duty at sea. He said, "You're off to New York, I hear."

"Yes, Dad. My exec just blew into town. We're going up to see some shows. He's never been to New York."

Commander Henry made a grouchy sound. What bothered him was the thought that a woman might be waiting in New York. A top student at the Academy, Warren had almost ruined his record with excessive Frenching out. He had ended with a bad back attributed by him to a wrestling injury; by other reports, to an escapade involving an older woman and a midnight car crash.

The doorbell rang and the old Irish houseman answered it. Rhoda stood. "That'll be Kip Tollever, Warren. Remember him?"

"Sure. That tall lieutenant commander who lived next door in Manila. Where's he stationed now?"

"He's just finished a term as naval attaché in Berlin," Pug said.

Warren made a comic grimace. "Jehosephat. How did he get stuck with *that*? Cookie pusher in an embassy!"

Rhoda looked at her husband, whose face remained impassive.

"Commander Tollever, ma'am," said the houseman.

"Hello, Rhoda!" Tollever marched in, with long arms outstretched, in a flawlessly cut evening uniform: blue mess jacket with medals, a black tie, a stiff snowy shirt. "My Lord, woman! You look ten years younger than you did in the Philippines."

"Oh, you," she said, eyes gleaming, as he kissed her cheek.

"Hi, Pug." Tollever stared at the son. "Now for crying out loud, which boy is this?"

Warren held out his hand. "Hello, sir. Guess."

"Aha. It's Warren. Byron had a different grin, and red hair. I was told you're serving in the *Monaghan*. What's Byron doing?"

Rhoda chirruped, "Oh, he's our romantic dreamer. Studying fine arts in Italy. And you should see Madeline! All grown up."

Warren excused himself and went out.

"Fine arts! Well, that *is* romantic." Tollever sat down, accepting a martini from Pug. "You'll love Germany. So will Rhoda. You'd be crazy not to grab the chance." He spoke about the attaché's job; still one of the handsomest men in Pug's class, and one of the unluckiest. During a night exercise, while officer of the deck

of a destroyer, Tollever had rammed a submarine that had surfaced right in front of him. The general court-martial had merely given him a letter of reprimand, but it had sapped his career. He drank two martinis in fifteen minutes as he talked.

When Pug probed about the Nazis, Tollever's tone grew firm. "Hitler's a remarkable man," he said. "I'm not saying that he, or Göring, or any of that bunch, wouldn't murder their own grandmothers to increase their power or Germany's. But that's politics in Europe nowadays. We Americans are far too naïve. The Soviet Union is the one big reality Europe lives with, Pug—those Bolos are out to rule Europe, and Hitler isn't about to let them. That's the root of the matter. The Germans do things that we wouldn't, like this stuff with the Jews, but that's not your business. Your job is military information, and you can get a lot of it. These people desperately want our friendship, and they're not at all bashful about showing off what they're accomplishing."

Rhoda asked about the Jews, and Tollever assured her that the newspaper stories were exaggerated. The worst thing had been the so-called Crystal Night, when Nazi toughs had smashed store windows and set fire to synagogues. Even that, the Jews had brought on themselves, by murdering a German embassy official in Paris. So far as Tollever knew, not one Jew had been physically harmed, though a big fine had been put on them for the death of the official. "Now as to the President's recalling our ambassador, that was a superfluous gesture, utterly," Tollever said.

Over more martinis, he began reminiscing about parties, hunting trips, and the like. Great fun and high living went with an attaché's job—he chuckled. Moreover, you were *supposed* to socialize, so as to dig up information. "The Nazis are a mixed bunch, Pug," he said. "Some brilliant, some pretty crude. The professional military crowd looks down on them. But Hitler is boss man—nobody's arguing about *that*. So lay off that topic and you'll do fine. The Krauts will turn themselves inside out for an American naval officer." He smiled ruefully. "How on earth did a gunnery red-hot like you come up for this job?"

"Stuck my neck out," Pug growled, "and I also speak German. You know the work I did on the magnetic torpedo exploder—"

"Hell, yes. And the letter of commendation."

"Well, I've watched torpedo developments since. Part of my job in War Plans is monitoring the latest intelligence on armaments. The Japs are making some mighty healthy torpedoes, Kip. I got the old slide rule out, and the way I read the figures our battle-wagons are falling below the safety margin. I wrote a recommendation that the blisters be thickened and raised on the *Maryland* and *New Mexico* classes. Today CNO called me in. My report's become a hot potato, with BuShips and BuOrd blaming each other, and memos flying. The blisters *will* be thickened and—"

"And you, Pug, got yourself offered the most interesting post in Europe. Don't pass it up."

REENTERING the house after seeing Tollever to his car, Victor Henry almost stumbled over a suitcase. His daughter stood at the foyer mirror, putting on a close-fitting hat. Rhoda was watching her, and Warren waited, trench coat slung on his shoulder.

"What's this, Madeline?" Pug said. "Where are *you* going?"

She smiled at him, opening wide dark eyes. "Didn't Mom tell you? Warren's taking me to New York."

Pug looked dourly at Rhoda, who said, "Anything wrong with that, dear? Warren's lined up extra theater tickets."

"Has college closed down, Madeline? Is this vacation?"

She said, "I'm caught up in my work, and it's only two days."

"I don't like this," Victor Henry said.

Madeline looked at him with melting appeal. Twenty, with Rhoda's skin and a pert figure, she had her father's determined air. She tried wrinkling her small nose at him. Often that made him laugh and won her point. This time his face did not change. Madeline took off her hat. "Well, okay! Warren, I hope you can get rid of those tickets. When's dinner, Mom?"

"Any time," Rhoda said.

Warren donned his trench coat. "Say, Dad, did I mention that a couple of months ago my exec put in for flight training? Well, I sent in a form too, and it seems we both have a chance."

"To become a carrier pilot?" Rhoda looked unhappy.

"Why, Mom, I think it makes good sense. Doesn't it, sir?"

Commander Henry said, "Yes, indeed. The future of this here navy might just belong to the brown shoes."

"Pensacola would be interesting, anyway. Well, back Friday. Sorry, Madeline."

She said, "Nice try. Have fun."

Pug Henry consumed his London broil in grim, abstracted silence. Kip Tollever's enthusiasm for the mediocre spying job had only deepened Pug's distaste. Madeline's itch to avoid schoolwork was a steady annoyance. And topping all was Warren's casually dropped news. Pug was both proud and alarmed. Carrier aviation was the riskiest duty in the navy, though officers even his own age were applying for Pensacola. In fact, devoted battleship man though he was, Pug had considered it himself.

Madeline kept a cheerful face, making talk with her mother about the student radio station at George Washington University, her main interest there. She excused herself early, kissing her father on the forehead.

The quiet during dessert was unbroken except by the houseman's soft footfalls in the candlelit dining room. The room was furnished with Rhoda's family antiques. She contributed money to the household costs, so that they could live in this style in Washington, among her old friends. While Pug did not like the arrangement, he had not argued. A commander's salary was modest, and Rhoda was used to a better life.

Rhoda waited out her husband's mood. When he was settled in the living room, drinking coffee, she said, "Pug, there's a letter from Byron. It's on the telephone table."

"What? He actually remembered we're alive?" They had not heard from him in months.

"He's in Siena—he got bored with fine arts in Florence."

"I'm hardly surprised. Siena's not far from Florence, is it?"

"No. He goes on and on about the Tuscan hills. And he seems to be interested in a girl."

"What kind of girl? Italian?"

"No, no. A New York girl. Natalie Jastrow. He says her uncle's a famous author. Dr. Aaron Jastrow. He lives in Siena, once taught history at Yale. Briny's doing some sort of research job for him."

Pug went to get the letter. He also brought back a thick book titled *A Jew's Jesus*. "That's who the uncle is. Some club sent it. I've read it twice. It's excellent." Pug read his son's letter carefully. "Well. This business is kind of far along."

"She does sound attractive," Rhoda said. "But he's had other nine-day wonders."

"Longest letter he's ever written. And if Byron is supporting himself, that's the biggest news about him since you had him." He drank his coffee and stood up. "I have some work to do."

Pug went to his den and sat down at his old portable typewriter. With his fingers on the keys he paused, contemplating pictures of the three children on the desk. Byron was in the center, with his half-closed analytic eyes, thick hair, and somewhat sloping face, peculiarly mingling softness and obstinate will. Byron owed his looks to neither parent. He was his strange self.

Dear Briny:

Your mother and I have your long letter. I intend to take it seriously. I don't think you've written such a letter before, or described a girl in quite such terms. I'm glad you're well, and gainfully employed. I never could believe in that fine arts business.

Now about Natalie Jastrow. In this miserable day and age, especially with what is going on in Germany, I have to start by protesting that I have nothing against Jews. Here in Washington there is quite a bit of prejudice, which comes out in bad jokes.

I know I'm jumping the gun, but before you're too involved you'd better give some thought to the long pull that a marriage is. Never forget that the girl you marry and the woman you must make a life with are *two different people*. Before marriage, a woman's out to win you. Afterward you're just one of many factors in her life. In a way you're secondary, because she *has* you, whereas everything else is in flux—children, household, new clothes, social ties. If these other factors are disagreeable to her, she will make you unhappy. With a girl like Natalie Jastrow, the other factors might bother her perpetually, from the mixed-breed children to the tiny social slights, until you both grew bitter and miserable. Also, I think there would be grave questions about the children's faith, since I feel you're a pretty good Christian.

I dislike intruding on your personal feelings, but I take it you wanted your letter answered. If I thought Natalie could make you happy and give your life some direction I'd welcome her. I'm impressed by what you say about her brains, and by her being Aaron Jastrow's niece. *A Jew's Jesus* is a remarkable work.

I'll show this to your mother. She may want to add something.

Warren is home. He has put in for flight training.

Love,
Dad

The following morning, Rhoda, grouchy at being awakened, read the letter and passed it back to her husband without a word.

"Do you want to add anything?"

"No." Her face was set. She had frowned at the bit about women and marriage. "Letters like that don't change things."

He put the letter in his breast pocket. "I see Admiral Preble at ten. Have you any second thoughts?"

"Pug, will you please do exactly as you choose?" Rhoda said in a bored tone. She sank down into the bedclothes as he left.

Pug had awakened that morning with an overmastering sense that he could not duck the assignment. The chief of naval operations did not appear surprised when Pug said he would take the post. He merely told him to get ready in a hurry. His orders to Berlin were already cut.

2

BYRON Henry's encounter with Natalie Jastrow two month's earlier had been much in character. He had drifted into it.

Growing up, he had refused to consider a naval career, yet he had no ideas for any other. In fits of resolve he had shown himself able to win a few A's, or put together a radio set, or make an old car run. But he became bored with his knack for tinkering and did too poorly in mathematics to think of engineering.

He might have been an athlete—he was agile and sturdy enough—but he disliked training and teamwork. At Columbia College he barely avoided expulsion for bad grades. In his junior year he elected a course in fine arts, which athletes took because, it was

said, nobody could fail it. At midsemester, however, Byron managed to. He had done no work and cut half the classes. Still, the F startled him, and he told the professor so. Dr. Milano, a lover of the Italian Renaissance, took a liking to him. They became friends. It was the first intellectual friendship in Byron Henry's life. He became a Renaissance enthusiast and finished college in a blaze of B pluses, afire to teach fine arts. One year at the University of Florence for a Master of Arts degree had been the plan.

But one rainy November night, in his squalid room in Florence, sick of the smells of garlic and bad plumbing and of living alone among foreigners, Byron wrote his friend that Italian Renaissance painting was garish and didn't really interest him. He scrawled several pages in a cornered-rat vein and then went vagabonding around Europe, forsaking his graduate degree.

The professor's reply was cheering: "Obviously art was a false lead. If you can find something that truly engages you, you may yet go far. . . . I've written about you to Dr. Aaron Jastrow, who lives outside Siena. We used to be friends at Yale, and he was very good at bringing out the best in young men. Go and talk to him."

AT FIRST glance, the girl at the wheel of the old blue convertible made no strong impression on him: an oval face, dark hair, enormous sunglasses, an open white shirt. Beside her sat a blond, pink-faced man in his mid-thirties, with alert blue eyes and thin lips compressed as though with habitual resolve.

"Hi! Byron Henry? I'm Natalie Jastrow. This is Leslie Slote. He works in our embassy in Paris, and he's visiting my uncle."

Byron did not much impress the girl, either. She saw a slender lounge, obviously American, propped against a wall of the Hotel Continental. The light gray jacket, dark slacks, and maroon tie were faintly dandyish. He looked like what he was—a collegiate drone, a rather handsome one. Natalie had brushed these off by the dozen in earlier years.

As they drove through Siena's narrow streets and out into the country, Byron idly asked the Foreign Service officer about his work. Slote told him he was in the political section and was studying Russian and Polish, hoping for assignment to Moscow or War-

saw. It occurred to Byron that the Foreign Service might be a pleasant career, offering travel, adventure, and encounters with important people. But when Slote mentioned that he was a Rhodes scholar, Byron decided not to pursue the topic.

Jastrow lived in a yellow stucco villa on a terraced hillside, with a fine view of the cathedral and Siena's red towers and tile roofs. As they entered a long beamed living room, a bearded little man rose from a red silk couch and came toward them. "Well, there you are!" The voice was high and impatient.

"This is Byron Henry, Aaron," the girl said.

Jastrow took Byron's hand and peered up at him. Jastrow's head was large; he had aging, freckled skin, light straight hair, and a neatly trimmed gray beard. "Columbia '38. Well, well, come along, Byron." He led the way to a table and, plucking the stopper from a heavy crystal decanter, carefully poured sherry into four glasses. "Come, Leslie, Natalie. This is an occasion!" He held up his glass. "To Mr. Byron Henry, eminent hater of the Italian Renaissance."

Byron laughed. "Is that what Dr. Milano wrote? Fair enough."

It was a spare lunch: vegetables with white rice, then cheese and fruit, served on fine old china, passed by an old Italian woman. The tall dining-room windows stood open to a sunny garden.

"What have you got against the Italian Renaissance, Byron?" the girl said. Removing her sunglasses, she had disclosed big slanted dark eyes flashing with bold intelligence.

"Yes, tell us," said Jastrow in a classroom voice.

Byron hesitated. Jastrow and the Rhodes scholar made him uneasy. The girl disconcerted him more. "I started out fascinated," he said. "But now I'm snowed under by all the garbage amid the works of genius. And I can't take the mixture of paganism and the Bible—I don't believe David looked like Apollo, or Moses like Jupiter. And what has Renaissance art to do with Christianity? If Christ, the poor idealistic preacher, walked into Saint Peter's, He wouldn't even suspect the place related to His teachings. I grew up with the Bible's Christ. My father's a religious man, and we had to read a chapter every morning. . . ."

Natalie was regarding him with an almost motherly smile. "Well, it's a point of view," she said.

Slote's eyes twinkled as he lit a pipe. "Don't fold up, Byron; others share your view. A good name for it is Protestantism."

"Byron's main point is accurate." Dr. Jastrow sounded kindly. "The Italian Renaissance was a great blossoming of art and ideas, Byron, that occurred when paganism and the Hebrew spirit—in its Christian expression—briefly fertilized instead of fighting each other. It was a hybrid growth, true, but some hybrids are stronger than either parent, you know. Witness the mule."

"Yes, sir," said Byron, "and mules are sterile."

Amused surprise flashed on Natalie's face.

"Well said. Just so." Jastrow nodded, pleased. "The Renaissance couldn't reproduce itself, and it died off. But that mule's bones are now one of our richest deposits of cultural achievement."

Leslie Slote said, "Is your father a clergyman, Byron?"

"His father's a naval officer," said Jastrow.

"Really? What branch?"

Byron said, "Well, right now he's in War Plans."

"My goodness! War Plans?" Dr. Jastrow pretended a comic flutter. "Is that as ominous as it sounds?"

"Sir, every country draws up theoretical war plans in peacetime. But as a matter of fact, I think there's going to be a war."

Byron saw the others exchange glances. Jastrow said, "Why?"

"Well, I just toured Germany. You see nothing but uniforms and parades, trucks full of troops, and trains loaded with tanks."

"With just such displays Hitler won Austria and the Sudetenland," said Jastrow, "and he never fired a shot."

Natalie said to Byron, "Leslie thinks my uncle should go home to the States. We've had a running argument for three days."

Jastrow was peeling a pear. "This is a comfortable house, and my work is going well. Moving would cost me half a year. If I tried to sell the house, no Italian would offer me a fair price. They've been dealing for centuries with foreigners who've had to cut and run. I expect to end my days here."

"Not at the hands of the Nazis, I trust," Slote said.

Jastrow ate a piece of pear and began lecturing. "Leslie, if Hitler were the Kaiser, I admit I'd be worried. Fortunately the old ruling class is destroyed. They unleashed the World War with their

dry-rotted incompetence, never dreaming that industrialized warfare would shatter the old system. So they went to the trash heap, and a tough, able new leadership—Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin—came up out of the sewers. Lenin was the great originator of the secret party, the fanatic language, the strident dogmas, the crude pagantry. It's all Leninism. Hitler is a Leninist. Lenin was all prudence and caution in foreign affairs, and so is Hitler. He has never moved when he couldn't get away with it. If he can make it in Poland without war, he'll do it. Not otherwise."

Slote toyed with his pipe with lean, nervous fingers. "You lose me, Aaron. Hitler a Leninist! Hitler only *shammed* socialism to get a mob of gangsters into power. Then he smashed the labor unions, cut the pay, and kept all the old rich crowd on top, the Krupps and Thyssens, the men who gave him the money to run for office. The big Nazis live like sultans. The concentration camps are for those who still want the socialist part of National Socialism. In 1934, Hitler shot his old party friends like partridges. That you rely on his prudence for your safety strikes me as grotesque."

"Does it?" Jastrow sighed. "I'm sorry."

Byron blurted, "Dr. Jastrow, in Germany I saw the signs on park benches and in trolley cars about the Jews. I saw burned-out synagogues. I'm surprised you talk so calmly about Hitler."

Dr. Jastrow smiled a slow, acid smile. "You may not be aware that the tolerance for Jews in Europe is less than a hundred years old, and that it's never gone deep. It didn't touch Poland, where I was born. Hitler represents only a return to normal."

"You love to spin such talk," Slote said, "but I wish you'd do it on the next boat home."

"Leslie," Jastrow said, "you rang wild alarms when Mussolini passed the anti-Jewish laws. They've proved a joke."

"Until the Germans press him to use them."

"Even if there is a war, the Italians won't fight. Siena may well be as safe a place as any."

"I doubt that Natalie's parents think so."

"She can go home tomorrow."

"I'm thinking of it," the girl said. "But not because of Hitler. There are things that bother me more."

"I daresay," Jastrow said. Slote's face reddened, and Jastrow stood up. "Byron, come along." They left the girl and the scarlet-faced man at the table, glowering at each other.

Books filled the shelves of a small wood-paneled library and stood in piles on the desk and floor. Over the fireplace hung a painting of a stiff Sienese madonna and child. "Now, Byron," Jastrow said. "Sit in the light where I can see you. Why didn't you go to the Naval Academy? Aren't you proud of your father?"

Byron sat up in his chair. "I think my father may be chief of naval operations one day. My brother's following that path. I'm just not interested."

"Dr. Milano wrote that you took a naval reserve course and obtained a commission."

"It made my father feel good."

"It's not too late for second thoughts, you know."

Byron shook his head, smiling. "Do you really like Italy, sir?"

"Well, I was ordered to a warm climate. Italy is beautiful, quiet, and cheap."

"Did you write *A Jew's Jesus* here?"

"Oh, no, but it got me here." Jastrow spoke somewhat smugly. "I was using the Bible in a course on ancient history, and in teaching the New Testament I tended to stress the rabbinic sources that Jesus and Paul used. This seemed to fascinate Yale juniors. So I cobbled up a book, which the Book-of-the-Month Club selected." Jastrow made a gesture around the room. "The club payment bought this place. Now then, Byron, do you want a job?"

Byron was taken aback. "Well, I guess I do, sir."

Jastrow ambled to his desk and searched through a pile of books. "I need a good researcher. Can I interest you, for twenty dollars a week, in the emperor Constantine? Ah, here we are. This is a good general biography to start with."

"Sir, I've flunked more history courses— But I'll try it."

"Oh, you will? When you say you have no aptitude? Why?"

"Well, for the money, and to be around you." There was a third good reason: Natalie Jastrow.

Jastrow laughed. "We'll give it a try."

THE LETTER BYRON'S PARENTS had received from him some time later about the girl had been unintentionally misleading. There was a love affair going on, but Natalie's lover was Leslie Slote. His letters to her from Paris came two or three times a week in Foreign Service envelopes. Byron hated the sight of them.

He was spending hours every day with Natalie in Jastrow's huge second-floor library. While she typed letters and manuscripts, Byron worked at the long library table, reading up on Constantine, checking facts, and drawing maps of military campaigns. Whenever he raised his eyes he saw the smooth face bent over the desk, the shapely bones highlighted by sunshine, or on dark days by a lamp. She wore almost no makeup, dressed in dun wool, and was all business with him.

Byron had always been something of an Adonis, doted on by girls, but indolent and not hotly interested; and unlike Warren, he had absorbed his father's straitlaced ideas. He had no thought of trying to break down Natalie's indifference to him. Still, his infatuation with her grew. He did things he had never done before. He stole a pale blue handkerchief of hers and took it back to his hotel room in town; he ate a half-finished cake she had left on her desk—he was altogether in a bad way.

They sometimes drove out in the hills for a picnic lunch, when she would slightly warm to him over a bottle of wine, treating him like a younger brother. The romance with Slote, he discovered, had begun when Natalie was studying in Paris after Radcliffe; always stormy, it had broken up once, but she was giving it another try. One picnic day she mentioned that Slote had received orders to Warsaw; she was planning to visit him there in July.

"Natalie," Byron said suddenly, "it seems to me you're wasting away here."

She cocked her head. "Well, you do peculiar things when you're in love. Besides, I think Aaron's rather wonderful. Crotchety and self-preoccupied, but this Constantine book is good. I enjoy typing the pages, just watching the way his mind works." She gave Byron a quizzical look. "Why *you're* doing this, I'm far less sure."

"Me?" Byron said. "I'm broke."

Early in March Jastrow accepted an offer from an American

magazine for an article about the Corsa del Palio, Siena's peculiar annual horse race. If Natalie would do the research, he told her, he would give her half the money. She jumped at it, not perceiving, so Byron thought, that her uncle was trying to keep her from going to Warsaw, for the race was run in July and again in August. Jastrow had once flatly said that his niece's pursuit of Slote was unladylike conduct and bad tactics. Byron gathered that Slote did not want to marry her, and he could see that for a Foreign Service man a Jewish wife at this time might be disastrous.

Natalie wrote to Slote, postponing her visit until after the August Palio. With joy, Byron watched her bang out the letter, hoping that Hitler, if he was going to invade Poland, would do it soon. When she had finished, he typed the famous letter to his parents. He was, he thought, just describing his job, his employer, and the charming girl he worked with.

So Pug Henry's solemn reply startled Byron when it came, for he was no more thinking of marrying Natalie Jastrow than of turning Mohammedan. He was in love with a young woman as remote as a star; for the moment it was enough to be where she was. He wrote again to set his father straight, but this letter arrived in Washington after the Henrys had left for Germany.

3

THE GOLD letters B R E M E N stretched across the curved black stern of the steamship. Above the letters, an immense red flag rippled in the breeze off the Hudson, showing at its center a big black swastika circled in white. Because of the practice it would give him with his German, Victor Henry had gotten special permission to sail on the *Bremen*.

The blasts of the ship's horn, the pier girders moving outside the porthole, the band far below crashing out "The Star-Spangled Banner" touched a spring in Rhoda. She threw her arms around her husband and gave him a kiss. "Well! We made it, Pug! Off to Deutschland. Second honeymoon and all THAT! Mmm!"

This mild pulse of sex in his uncertain-tempered wife was like a birthday present to the monogamous Pug. He pulled her close.

The Windy City
"Well!" Rhoda broke free with a husky laugh. "Not so fast, young fellow. I want a drink, or two, or three."

In the already crowded bar they found two stools and ordered champagne cocktails. "Well, to whom?" Rhoda said.

"The kids," Pug said.

"Ah, yes. To our abandoned nestlings!" She thought of Madeline, living with Rhoda's sister in Washington. The girl had pleaded to be allowed to drop out of college and take a job with a radio network in New York, but to Pug that was unthinkable.

As she polished off the cocktail, Rhoda talked excitedly. She felt very adventurous, she said, sailing on a German ship these days. "Pug, I wonder if there are any Nazis right here in this bar?"

A man sitting next to Rhoda shifted his glance to her. He wore a feathered green hat, and he was drinking from a stein.

"Let's go on deck," Pug said. "See the Statue of Liberty."

"I've seen the Statue of Liberty. I want another drink."

Pug made a slight peremptory move of a thumb, and Rhoda got off the stool. When anything touched his navy work, he could treat her like a deckhand. In a whipping wind they walked to the stern, where passengers were watching Manhattan drift past. Leaning on a patch of clear rail, Pug said quietly, "Look, unless we're in the open air like this, you can assume anything we say will be recorded. At the bar, at the table, in our stateroom."

"In our stateroom? You don't mean day and night? Pug!"

"That's what this job is. If they didn't do it, they'd be sloppy, and Germans aren't sloppy. It'll be the same in Berlin. Kip says you can never stop thinking about what you say or do, anywhere."

AN ENGRAVED card, slid under their cabin door before dinner, invited them to the captain's table. They debated whether Pug should wear a uniform and decided against it. The guess turned out to be correct. A German submarine officer at the table wore a business suit. The captain, a paunchy, stiff man in gold-buttoned blue, heavily joshed the ladies in slow English or clear German. Now and then he flicked a finger, and a terrified steward would jump to his side. The food was abundant and exquisite.

On Pug's left sat Mrs. Grobke, the submariner's wife, a talka-

tive, busty blonde in low-cut chiffon. At his right sat a small English girl in gray tweed, the daughter of Alistair Tudsbury. Tudsbury was the only real celebrity at the table, a British broadcaster and correspondent, about six feet two, with a huge mustache, thick glasses, booming voice, and an enormous appetite.

It was an awkward meal. Nobody mentioned politics, war, or the Nazis. Even books and plays were risky. Once or twice Pug turned away from the blonde and tried to amuse Tudsbury's daughter. "I suppose you're on vacation from school?"

"Well, sort of permanently. I'm twenty-eight."

"Oh? I thought you were about my daughter's age—twenty."

"Many people make that mistake, Commander, because I travel with my father. His eyes were spoiled at Amiens, gassed in the war. I help him with his work."

"That must be interesting."

"Depending on the subject matter. Nowadays it's a sort of a broken record. Will the little tramp go, or won't he?"

Pug Henry was brought up short. The "little tramp" was Charlie Chaplin, of course, and by ready transfer, Hitler. She was saying that Tudsbury's one topic was whether Hitler would start a war. By not dropping her voice, by using a phrase which a German ear would be unlikely to catch, by keeping her face placid, Pamela Tudsbury had managed not only to touch the forbidden subject but to express a world of contempt for the dictator of Germany.

HALF a dozen early morning walkers were swinging along when Pug came out on the cool sunlit deck. He had calculated that five turns would make a mile, and he meant to do fifteen. Rounding the bow, he saw the Tudsbury girl coming toward him. "Good morning." They passed with nods and smiles. At the third encounter he said, reversing his direction, "Let me join you."

"Oh, thank you, yes."

"Doesn't your father like to walk?"

"He hates all forms of exercise. Anyway, right now poor Talky has a touch of gout. It's his curse."

"Talky?"

Pamela Tudsbury laughed. "His middle name is Talcott. Since



The Windiest of Men
schoolboy days, he's been 'Talky' to his friends. Guess why!" She glanced up at him. "Your wife's not a walker either?"

"Late sleeper. Well, what does your father really think? Will the little tramp go?"

She laughed, a keen look brightening her eyes. "He's come out boldly to the effect that time will tell."

"What do you think?"

"Me? I just type what *he* thinks." She gestured at three deep-breathing German matrons in tailored suits marching by. "I know that I feel queer sailing on a ship of theirs."

"Hasn't your father just published a book? I'd like to read it."

"There's a copy in the ship's library. He sent me to check," she said, with a grin that reminded him of Madeline catching him in self-importance. Last night he had not paid this girl much mind, but now he noticed with pleasure the fresh coloring of the heart-shaped face, the expressive green-gray eyes, fine straight nose, heavy brown hair. He wished Warren could meet her.

"You're going around again?" she said. "I get off here. If you do read his book, carry it under your arm. It'll make his trip."

After breakfasting alone, Pug went to the library. The shelves held many German volumes on the World War. Pug found one titled *U-boats: 1914-18* and settled down to see what it said about American destroyer tactics. Soon he heard the scratch of a pen. At a small desk nearby, the German submarine man sat with his bristly head bent, writing. Pug had not seen him come in.

Grobke looked up. "Recalling old times?" he said in English.

"Well, I was in destroyers."

"And I was down below. Maybe this is not the first time our paths cross. How about a drink before dinner to compare notes?"

"I'd enjoy that."

Pug put away the U-boat book and took Tudsbury's, to read on deck for a while before he went below to work. He had brought weighty books on German industry, politics, and history, and meant to grind through the lot on the way to his post.

The bow wave was boiling away, a V of white foam on the blue sunlit sea, and the *Bremen* was rolling like a battleship. Nostalgia swept over Pug. It was four years since he had served at sea,

eleven since he had had a command. He was calculating the wind speed when he heard Tudsbury blare, "Hello there, Commander. I hear you were out walking my Pam at the crack of dawn."

"Yes. I have plans for her to meet a son of mine."

"Oh?" Tudsbury gave him a waggish glance. "She's a handful."

"What? I've never met a gentler girl."

"Still waters," said Tudsbury. "I say, is that *my* book? How far have you got?"

"I just drew it from the library."

Tudsbury's mustache dropped. "You didn't buy it? Damn all libraries!" He bellowed a laugh. "It's a bad book, really, but the part about Hitler's takeover of Austria is not too awful."

He talked about Hitler's rise to power, sounding much as he did on the air: positive, informed, cheerfully ominous. "Did you know that for five years this Führer lived as a seedy tramp in a fat and prosperous Vienna? He was a lazy, incompetent misfit. Then during the World War he was a messenger runner in the German army, a low job, and at thirty he was lying broke, discharged, and gassed in an army hospital." Tudsbury's voice was beginning to roll in his best professional style. "And then, what happened? Why, this same half-mad little wretch leaped out of his hospital bed and went in ten years straight to the top of the German nation. And he returned to Vienna the sole heir of the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns."

"Well, it's the old story of the stitch in time," Pug said. "Your politicians could have stopped him early on. But they didn't. Incidentally, where are you headed? Berlin, too?"

Tudsbury nodded. "Amazing! Dr. Goebbels is letting me. I've been *persona non grata* in the Third Reich since Munich. But the Jerries are being kind to Englishmen this month, probably so we'll hold still while they roll over the Poles. I expect we will, too, but if it does come to war, you Americans may have to lend more of a hand than you did last time."

"That might not be in the cards," Pug said. "We've got the Japanese on our hands. They're carving up China, and they've got a first-class navy, growing every month. If they make the Pacific a Japanese lake and do what they want on the Asian

mainland, the world will be theirs in fifty years. Compared with that, this Hitler business is just the same old cat-and-dog fight."

Tudsbury peered at him, with a reluctant nod. "Possibly you underestimate the Germans."

THE American commander and the U-boat man took to meeting in the bar each evening before dinner. Pug figured that it was his job to pump Grobke, as it might well be the German's to work on him. Grobke was a thorough professional and a real seafarer. He talked freely about the machinery in the present U-boats and even confessed to problems with torpedoes. His harassed disdain for politicians sounded like any American naval man's.

On the last night of the crossing, when orchids were at every lady's place and the champagne was going around, the topic of international politics finally surfaced at the captain's table. Everybody agreed that war was a silly, wasteful way of settling differences, especially among advanced nations like England, France, and Germany. "We're all of the same stock," Tudsbury said. "It's a sad thing when brothers fall out."

The captain nodded happily. "Exactly. If we'd only stick together, the Bolsheviks would never move. And who else wants war?" All through the saloon, people were wearing paper hats and tossing streamers, and Pug observed that a party of Jews he had met were as gay as everybody else, ministered to by politely smiling German waiters. The captain followed Pug's glance. "You see, Commander, how welcome we make them. The exaggerations on that subject are fantastic." He said to Tudsbury, "Aren't you journalists a bit responsible for that?"

"Well, Captain," Tudsbury said, "to foreigners, the policy toward Jews is one of the novel things about your government."

"Tudsbury is not wrong, Captain," Grobke broke in. "That policy has been mishandled." He turned to Pug. "Still, it's so unimportant compared with what the Führer has achieved: Germany has come back to life. The people have work, they have food and houses, and they have spirit. And our youth is just incredible! Under Weimar they were rioting, becoming Communists, going in for sex perversions and drugs. Now they're working, *serving*,

happy. My crews are happy. I tell you what, Victor. You come visit our sub base in Swinemünde. It'll open your eyes."

Pug hesitated, then said, "I'd like that, if we can work it out."

"Without formalities!" Grobke waved his arms. "It's a personal invitation from me to you. We're independent in the U-boat command. You can visit us with no strings. I'll see to that."

"The invitation wouldn't include me, would it?" Tudsbury said.

Grobke paused, then laughed. "Why not? The more the British know about what we've got, the less likely a hasty mistake."

"Well, here may be an important little step for peace," said the captain, "transacted at my table! We will have more champagne on it at once." And so the diners at the captain's table on the *Bremen* all drank to peace, a few minutes before midnight, as the great liner slowed, approaching the shore lights of Nazi Germany.

THE Henrys had barely arrived in Berlin when they were invited to meet Hitler. It was a rare piece of luck, the embassy people told them. The Führer was staying away from Berlin in order to damp down the war talk, but a visit of the Bulgarian Prime Minister had brought him back.

While Pug studied protocol of Nazi receptions, in spare moments of his piled-up office work, Rhoda flew into a two-day frenzy. Her hair, she asserted, had been ruined by the imbecile hairdresser at the Adlon Hotel, and she had no dresses in the least suitable for a formal afternoon reception. Three hours before the event she was still whirling from one dress shop to another. She burst into their hotel room clad in a pink silk suit. "How's this?" she barked. "I hear Hitler likes pink."

"Perfect!" Pug privately thought it was terrible.

The way to the chancellery was lined with flags, interspersed with Nazi standards in the style of the Roman legion emblems: long poles, each topped by gilt eagles perched on wreathed swastikas, and underneath, the letters NSDAP.

"What on earth does NSDAP mean?" Rhoda said, peering out of the embassy car.

"National Socialist German Workers Party," said Pug.

"How funny. Sounds sort of Commie. I thought he was against

all that stuff. It couldn't be more confusing. But I do think all this is terribly exciting."

Hitler's new chancellery reminded Victor Henry of Radio City Music Hall in New York. The opulent stretch of carpet, the long line of waiting people, the gaudily uniformed ushers, the great expanses of shiny marble all added up to a strained effort to be grand. An officer took the Henrys' name, and the slow-moving line carried the couple toward the Führer, far down the hall. Blond SS guards in black-and-silver uniforms and black boots shepherded the guests with careful smiles.

Hitler was no taller than Victor Henry—a small man, bowing as he shook hands with his guests, his hair falling on his forehead. His down-curved mouth looked rigid and tense under the famous small mustache, his eyes sternly self-confident. This was Pug's first impression, but it changed. When Hitler smiled, his face brightened up, showing a strong hint of humor and an almost boyish shyness. Sometimes, when he was particularly amused, he laughed and, oddly, jerked his right knee up and inward.

A protocol officer intoned in German: "The naval attaché to the embassy of the United States of America, Commander Victor Henry!"

The Führer's handclasp was firm as he scanned Pug's face. Seen this close, Hitler's deep-set eyes were pale blue and puffy—a zealot's remote eyes. To be looking into this famous face was the strangest sensation Victor Henry had ever had.

Hitler said, "*Willkommen in Deutschland.*"

Surprised that Hitler should be aware of his recent arrival, Pug stammered, "*Danke! Herr Reichskanzler.*"

"*Fräulein Henry!*"

Rhoda, her eyes gleaming, shook hands with Adolf Hitler. "I hope you are comfortable in Berlin," he said in German. His voice was low, almost folksy.

"Well, *Herr Reichskanzler*, I've just begun looking for a house," Rhoda said, too overcome to make a polite reply and move on.

"You will have no difficulty." Hitler's eyes warmed at her clear German speech. Evidently he found her pretty. He kept her hand, faintly smiling.



"There are so many charming neighborhoods in Berlin that I'm bewildered. That's the problem."

This pleased Hitler. He laughed, kicked his knee inward and spoke to an aide behind him. The Henrys moved on.

The reception did not last long. Colonel Forrest, the military attaché, introduced the Henrys to Nazi leaders, including Goebbels and Ribbentrop, whose perfunctory handshakes made Pug feel like the small fry he was. Hitler had not done that.

Two days later, Pug was working at the embassy at his morning mail when his yeoman buzzed him. "Mrs. Henry, sir."

It was early for Rhoda to be up. She said grumpily that a man named Knödler, a renting agent, was in the hotel lobby. He had sent up a note saying he had been advised they were looking for a house. "It's so odd. You don't suppose *Hitler* sent him?"

Pug laughed. "Maybe his aide did. Well, what can you lose? Go and look at some of his houses."

Rhoda called back at three thirty in the afternoon. "There's this wonderful house in the Grunewald section, right on a lake. It even has a tennis court! And it's not even a hundred dollars a month. Can you come right away and look at it?"

Pug went. It was a gray stone mansion roofed in red tile, set amid tall old trees on a smooth lawn sloping to the water's edge. Inside the house were oriental carpets, gilt-framed old paintings, a walnut dining table with sixteen silk-upholstered chairs, and a long living room cluttered with elegant French pieces. The place had five upstairs bedrooms and three marbled baths.

When Pug asked Knödler why the price was so low, the agent cheerfully explained that the owner was Herr Rosenthal, a Jewish manufacturer; the house was vacant because of a new ruling affecting the property of Jews.

"Does he know you're offering it to us, and at this price?"

"Naturally," Knödler said in an offhand tone.

"When can I meet him?"

"Any time you say."

Pug arranged an appointment for the next afternoon.

Herr Rosenthal, a gray-headed, paunchy, highly dignified individual, met Pug at the house and invited him inside.

"It's a beautiful house," Pug said in German.

Rosenthal glanced around with wistful affection. "Thank you. We're fond of it."

"Mrs. Henry and I feel awkward about leasing it."

The Jew looked surprised. "If a lower rent would help—"

"Good Lord, no! It's an incredibly low rent. But will you actually receive the money?"

"Of course. It's my house." Rosenthal spoke proudly.

"Knödler told me that some new ruling compels you to rent it."

"That won't affect you as tenant." Rosenthal dropped his voice. "Well—it's an emergency decree, you understand. It will eventually be canceled, I have been assured. Meantime this property can be placed under a trusteeship and sold at any time, without my consent. However, if there's a tenant with diplomatic immunity, that can't be done." He smiled. "Hence the modest rent, Herr Commandant. You see, I'm not hiding anything."

"May I ask why you don't sell out and leave Germany?"

The Jew blinked. "My family has a sugar-refining business here, more than one hundred years old. My wife and I are comfortable enough. We are both native Berliners." He hesitated. "The Führer has done remarkable things for the country. It would be foolish to deny that. I have lived through other bad times. I was shot through a lung in Belgium in 1914." He spread his hands in a graceful, resigned gesture.

Victor Henry said, "Well, we love the house, but I don't want to take advantage of anybody's misfortune. How about a year's lease, with an option to renew?"

At once Rosenthal held out his hand. "We should have a drink on it, but we emptied the liquor closet when we left."

WITHIN a few days, the Henrys were in the mansion. From an employment agency came a houseman-chauffeur, a maid, and a cook, all first-rate servants and—Pug assumed—all planted informers. He found no listening devices in the house, but he and Rhoda walked on the lawn to discuss touchy matters.

A whirling couple of weeks passed. Since the President had withdrawn the ambassador in protest against the Crystal Night

affair in 1938, the embassy had been left to the chargé d'affaires. He arranged a reception for the Henrys and so did Colonel Forrest. At each, Rhoda made a quick hit. She liked Berlin and its people. The Germans sensed this and warmed to her.

She was not blind to Nazi abuses. During her first walk in the Tiergarten, the signs on the benches saying *JUDEN VERBOTEN* nauseated her. Similar signs in restaurant windows made her demand to go elsewhere. Gradually she reacted less to such things, seeing how much they were taken for granted, but she kept insisting, even to prominent Nazis, that anti-Semitism was a blot on an otherwise lovely land.

Most foreigners were strongly for or against the Nazis. The correspondents hated them to a man. Within the embassy, views varied: to some, Hitler was the greatest menace to America since 1776; to others, he was Europe's only bulwark against bolshevism. Victor Henry decided he would grope uselessly if he tried to fathom these major matters in a hurry. Instead he would dig into a narrow but decisive aspect of Hitler's Third Reich that he did know something about—its military capacity. Was Nazi Germany as strong as the ever-marching columns in the streets suggested? Or was it all a show?

Meanwhile Rhoda's dinner parties increased in size and elegance. She invited the Grobkes, whose home was in Berlin, to one that included a French film actress, the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, and a dour German general named Armin von Roon. The presence of General von Roon all but froze Grobke with awe. He whispered to Victor Henry that von Roon was the real brain in Supreme Headquarters. Pug tried to talk to him about the war, but the general would utter only frosty generalities.

That evening Grobke, full of wine and brandy, reported that the captain of the Swinemünde navy yard was making difficulties about Pug's visit, but that he was going to push it through. "These shore-based bastards just live to create trouble," he said.

The Henrys received one cheerless letter from Madeline, who was reluctantly accompanying her aunt to Newport for the summer. Warren, as usual, did not write at all. Early in July the letter Byron had written his father at last caught up with him.

Dear Dad:

I guess I gave you the wrong impression about Natalie. It's fun to work with her, but she's older than I am, a Phi Beta at Radcliffe, and her boy friend is a Rhodes scholar. I'm not in that league. However, talking to her improves my mind. That should please you.

Dr. Jastrow has me researching the emperor Constantine's military campaigns for a new book. I took the job for the money, but I'm enjoying it. Siena's going to be overrun with tourists for the Palio, a goofy horse race they put on every year around the town square. They say all hell usually breaks loose.

Warren will make a great flier. Love to all.

Byron

4

IN NINE years of living just outside Siena, Aaron Jastrow had never attended a Palio. When Byron asked why, he said that the cruel public games of Roman times had been the forerunners of these burlesque races, which had survived in mountain-locked Siena from the Middle Ages. "I just wasn't interested," he said. Moreover, his friend the archbishop had warned him of the risk of being trampled in the crowds. But now there was the article to write. Jastrow obtained tickets for both runnings, and sent Byron and Natalie to do research in the town.

The race, they learned, was a contest between ten of Siena's neighborhoods or parishes. Each district, called a *contrada*, comprised only a few square blocks, but the *contrade* took themselves with the utmost seriousness. They bore curious names, such as "Goose," "Caterpillar," "Tower," "Tortoise," and each had its own flag, its anthem, its church, and even a sort of capital hall.

Maps in hand, Byron and Natalie visited the tiny districts and learned of alliances and hatreds going back hundreds of years. Panther was friendly to Giraffe, Tortoise loathed Snail, and so forth. They came to realize too that the famous race was just a crooked farce. The *contrade* owned no horses, but drew lots for animals brought in from the countryside, the same stolid durable nags shuffling from one neighborhood to another year after year.

What then made a race of it? Bribing the jockeys, doping the animals, conspiring to block the best horses or injure their riders: only such devices turned it into a murky contest. A district might squander all its funds in bribes, just to win a banner to bear off to its hall. For the *palio* itself was a banner picturing the Virgin.

"Why, the article will write itself," Jastrow said one day at lunch. "With their rival *contrade* the Sienese have evolved a grotesque little parody of European nationalism. And the Palio—that lovely, colorful outburst of treachery and violence—is war."

"You know," Byron said, "this whole thing is utterly idiotic."

Natalie looked at him with startled, excited eyes. It was the day of the first Palio, and they stood on the balcony of the archbishop's palace, watching the parade. The great façade of the gaudy, zebra-striped cathedral shaded one end of the balcony, where Jastrow in a big Panama hat and white suit stood talking with the archbishop. Byron and Natalie were at the other end, in the hot sun. Below, the Caterpillar marchers in green-and-yellow costumes—puffed sleeves and trunks, colored hose, feathered hats—were leaving the thronged cathedral square; and the red-and-black Owl company was coming in, its flag-wavers leaping over each other's poles while keeping their banners in fluid motion.

"I was just deciding it's rather magical," Natalie said.

"But we've seen the same things for hours. And I'm roasting."

"Ah, Byron, it's the liquid flow of color, don't you see, and the *faces* of these young men. So help me, these people look more natural in medieval togs than in their workaday clothes."

"I was in the Goose church today," Byron said, mopping his face. "They brought the horse inside, to the very altar, to be blessed. I guess that finished the Palio for me."

Natalie glanced at him, amused. "Poor Briny. Italian Christianity really troubles your soul, doesn't it? Leslie was right, you're simply a Protestant."

The sun was low when the parade reached the Piazza del Campo, the town's central square, which would be the racetrack. In the short walk from the cathedral down to the piazza, Jastrow grew nervous. A thick crowd jostled down the narrow street, and

more than once the little professor stumbled. He clung to Byron's arm. "Good gracious," he said. "The piazza's transformed!"

Siena's main piazza is one of the sights of Italy, a beautiful open space, hemmed in by a semicircular sweep of red-brown stone palazzi and the imposing façade of the fourteenth-century Palazzo Pubblico, the town hall. Today, in the golden light of late afternoon, it was a sea of people surging inside a ring of wooden barriers. Between these barriers and the palazzi's walls lay a track of earth, and against the walls were steep banks of benches, now jammed. The parade was going around the track, to the roars of the throng and the blare of brass bands.

Byron led the way to their seats. The starting line was directly in front of them, and behind them, above the judges' stand, the *palio* hung on its pole.

As the light deepened to sunset color, a heavy tolling began in the great bell tower of the town hall. The crowd fell quiet. Trumpets struck up the Palio march, and out trotted the caparisoned horses with their flamboyantly costumed jockeys.

Natalie's fingers slid into Byron's and clasped them, and for a moment she put her cheek against his. "Idiotic, Briny?" she murmured. He was too delighted with the contact to answer.

After two false starts, the ten horses went thudding off, their jockeys clubbing wildly at them and at each other. A yell rose as two horses went down. Byron watched an unconscious jockey being dragged off the dirt and saw a riderless horse gallop to the front of the pack, dripping foam.

"Can a riderless horse win?" Jastrow shouted.

A man in the row below him turned up a warty red face. "*Si, si. Viva Bruco!* Cater-peel-air, meestair!"

The noise in the piazza swelled to a scream as the horses went around for a second and then a third time, passing the finish in a shower of dirt. The riderless horse, wearing Caterpillar colors, was still in front. Its red eyes were rolling.

"*Bruco!*" screamed the warty man, leaping into the air. "*Bravissimo! WHOO!*" The track was now boiling with people, yelling, embracing, shaking fists, or beating each other up.

Jastrow said nervously, "Perhaps we had better leave—"

Byron held him back. "Not yet. Sit right where you are, sir."

A squad of young men, with yellow-and-green Caterpillar scarves, came through the mob to the judges' stand. There, a pallid youngster streaming blood from his forehead seized the victory banner, while his whole squad roared and cheered.

"Now!" Byron said, as the crowd parted again for the triumphant Caterpillars. Moving right behind them, with one arm around the girl and the other around Jastrow, Byron got through the archway into the main lower street of the town. But here the mob eddied in behind the Caterpillars and engulfed them.

"Dear me, I didn't bargain for this," gasped Jastrow, fumbling at his glasses. "My feet are scarcely touching the ground, Byron."

"Don't fight it, sir. Take it easy—" But a surge of the crowd tore the professor out of Byron's grasp. There was a sound of hooves and shouts of alarm: the Caterpillar horse had gotten free and was rearing and flailing its forelegs. As the crowd fled and Byron pulled Natalie into a doorway, Jastrow emerged in the street without his glasses, stumbled, and fell in the horse's path.

Without a word, Byron ran to him, snatched Jastrow's big hat off his head and waved it in the horse's face, crouching, watching the hooves. The creature neighed wildly and pranced about on two legs, foaming at the mouth. Four Caterpillar men finally seized the reins and began to quiet the horse.

Several people darted out to help Jastrow up. Men surrounded Byron, slapping his shoulder and shouting in Italian as he made his way to Jastrow. "Here's your hat, sir."

"Oh, thank you, Byron. My glasses, you haven't seen them, have you?" He was blinking blindly. "Goodness, what a commotion. I heard a horse clattering about, but I couldn't see a thing."

"He's all right," Natalie said to Byron, with a look straight into his eyes such as she had never before given him. "Thanks."

A WEEK or so later, Natalie and Byron were at work in the library when Natalie suddenly looked up from her desk. "Byron, would you like to go to Warsaw with me?"

Byron choked back his joy. "What would be the point?"

"Well, Leslie Slote says it's rather old-world and gay. The thing

is, Aaron's getting difficult about my trip." Having come close to getting killed at the Palio, Jastrow was having a spell of nerves. A visit from the American consul in Florence had worsened this glum mood. He worried now about the Polish situation.

Byron said, "Would my going make a difference?"

"Yes. Aaron can't get over your striking presence of mind at the Palio. If you go, he'll stop saying it's too risky."

"Your friend Slote might take a dim view of me."

"I'll handle him. All right? But if you need money—"

"Oh, I've got enough. In fact, I guess I'll go."

"Bless you! We'll have fun. I'll see to that."

Later, Dr. Jastrow sent for Byron. "What a load you've taken off my mind!" he said. "That headstrong girl doesn't know how wild and backward Poland is. My relatives write me that it hasn't improved one iota since I left there forty-five years ago. And Hitler is making nasty noises. Well, I'll be here alone, then."

"You won't go home?" Byron said.

"I'm not sure. For one thing, I let my passport lapse, and not being native-born, there's some red tape involved in renewing it."

"You should certainly straighten that out," Byron said.

"Of course. These things used to be simple, the consul says. But since the flood of refugees from Hitler began, the rules have tightened up. Well, Byron, I hope you'll meet my cousin Berel. I haven't seen him since I left Poland, but we usually exchange letters. Presence of mind has always been his strong point, too."

5

PAMELA Tudsbury drove Pug Henry and her father to Swinemünde in a rented Mercedes. Pug was appalled at her driving. In Berlin she obeyed the speed laws, but once on the autobahn she rocketed to one hundred and fifty kilometers an hour. Tudsbury chatted over the wind roar, saying he now thought there might be no war. The British were at last dealing seriously with the Russians; they were turning out airplanes so fast that air parity, which they had lost some years ago, was in sight again; and their pledge to Poland showed Hitler that this time Chamberlain meant business.

Tudsbury foresaw a respite of two or three years during which the democracies would rearm faster than Germany could.

Commander Grobke met them at the base gate, and while Pamela roared off to a hotel, Grobke took the two men for a long tour, by car and on foot, through the Swinemünde yard. The bleak seacoast base could be New London, Victor Henry thought. In fact, viewing the black submarines tied in clusters to the long piers or resting in dry docks, the clanking overhead cranes, the blaze of welding torches, the grease-blackened cheerful men in goggles and hard hats, the half-finished hulls slanting into dirty water—he might have been in Britain, Japan, France, or the United States. The differences that counted, the crucial numbers and performance characteristics, were not discernible.

"Well," said Grobke, stopping at a dry dock where a U-boat lay. "This is my flagship. Since I cannot have you aboard, Tudsbury, much as I would like to, I suppose we all part company here."

Pug caught the German's meaning. "Look, let's not stand on ceremony. If I can come aboard, I'll come and Tudsbury won't."

"Good Lord, yes," said the Englishman. "I've no business here anyway."

A whistle blasted, and workmen came trooping off the boats and docks. "The old navy yard hazard at five o'clock," Pug said. "Run for your life, or they'll trample you to death."

Tudsbury laughed. "Well, in my next broadcast I'll have to say that the U-boat command is humming like anything. I hope they'll take notice in London."

Grobke shook the Englishman's hand. "We want to be friends. We know you have the greatest navy in the world. These silly little boats can do a lot of damage for their size, that's all. One of my officers will drive you to your hotel."

The U-46 looked much like an American submarine to Pug, although the cleanliness, polish, and order were unusual. No doubt a cleanup had been ordered for the American visitor. "Smells pretty good," Pug said, as they passed the tiny galley, where cooks were preparing dinner.

"Would you care to eat aboard?" Grobke said.

Pug said at once, "I'd be delighted."

In the U-boat's narrow wardroom he felt completely at home. The four junior officers were shy and wary at first. However, they soon warmed to the American's compliments about the boat, and the joking of Grobke, who got into an excellent mood over the feast of cabbage soup, boiled fresh salmon, roast pork, potato dumplings, and gooseberry *torten*. They told of the ordeals of their early training: about the electric shocks to which they had had to submit without flinching; exposure to cold and heat past the point of collapse; the "Valley of Death" cross-country run, wearing seventy-pound loads and gas masks. An officer emerged the better, they said, from such rigor. Grobke disagreed, asserting that such Prussian sadism was old-fashioned and the blind submission it implanted was less desirable than initiative in war at sea.

The sun was setting when Pug and Grobke left the submarine. "So, Victor, I suppose you join your English friend now?"

"Not if you have any better ideas. I could stand a beer."

"Now you're talking! I'll take you where the officers hang out."

They drove out through the yard. "Damn quiet after five o'clock," said Pug.

"Oh, yes. Dead. Always."

They went to a smoky, timbered cellar where young men in turtleneck sweaters sat at long tables, bellowing songs to a concertina. Grobke chose a small side table under an amber lamp. After a couple of beers, Pug joined in a song he recognized. He had no ear and sang badly off key, which struck Grobke as hilarious. "I swear to God, Victor," he said, laughing, "could anything be crazier than all this talk of war? I tell you, if they left it to the navy fellows on both sides, it could never happen. Still, Hitler is too smart to have a war over Poland." He drained his stein. "*Geben Sie gut acht auf den Osten*. Watch the east," he said, dropping his voice. "There's something doing in the east."

The barmaid clacked on the table two more foaming steins. Grobke took one and leaned forward intently. "Do you think the Führer would risk a war against England with seventy-four operational U-boats? No. But in eighteen months we'll have three hundred. Then England will think twice about making trouble. Meantime, watch the east."

"*Watch the east!*" Pug said in a wondering tone.

"Aha, you're a little curious? I have a brother in the Foreign Ministry. We're not going to be fighting this year, I promise you."

IN THE library of the Grunewald mansion, Victor Henry had been typing since midnight. It was now four in the morning. Paper and carbons lay raggedly around him. He stopped, yawning, and read over his report to the Office of Naval Intelligence.

COMBAT READINESS OF NAZI GERMANY

Nazi Germany is a very peculiar country. The old Germany is still here, the medieval buildings, the order, the good nature, the "thoroughness," the fine-looking people. However, the Nazi regime adds a layer of something new and striking: the swastika flags, marching battalions, Hitler Youth, torchlight parades and such. But what is behind the façade? Is there a strong potential for war-making, or is it mainly political propaganda and bluff?

It is common knowledge that since 1933, even before the Hitler regime, Germany has been frankly and even boastfully rearming. Seven years ago this nation was still helpless compared with the Allies. The question is, to what extent has Hitler closed that gap? Two preliminary conclusions emerge:

(1) Nazi Germany has not closed the gap sufficiently to embark on a war with England and France.

Drawing on his own reading and inquiries, Pug presented comparisons of French, British, and German industrial expansion during the past decade, and of strength on land, sea, and in the air. He concluded that Germany remained inferior in every aspect of warmaking, except for her air force; and that the edge in the air would rapidly melt away with the British speedup in making airplanes. As to land war, the figures proved that France alone could put a larger, better trained and equipped army in the field.

(2) The regime is not making an all-out effort to close the gap.

Hitler had not even put his country on a war-production basis. Pug described the desolate peace that fell over the Swinemünde

navy yard after quitting time; there was not even a second shift for constructing U-boats, the key to German sea warfare. Grobke had claimed seventy-four operational submarines. British and French evaluations made it fifty-one. But even exaggerating, as he would to a foreign intelligence officer, Grobke had not gone as high as a hundred. In 1918 alone Germany had lost nearly a hundred U-boats.

Then came the crucial passage, which he anxiously read over and over: "What follows gets into prognostication, and so may be judged frivolous. However, all the evidence indicates to me that Hitler is negotiating a military alliance with the Soviet Union."

Listing his arguments in support of his idea, Victor Henry acknowledged that none of it added up to hard intelligence; nor did it impress the professionals at the embassy. The Nazi movement, they insisted, was built on fear of bolshevism and a pledge to destroy it. The whole theme of *Mein Kampf* was conquest of "living room" for Germany in the southwest provinces of Russia. A military reconciliation between the two systems was unthinkable.

Pug maintained, nevertheless, that the move was inevitable. Hitler was far out on a limb in his threats against Poland, but hadn't the combat readiness for a world war. A Russian alliance was a way out. If Russia were to give the Germans a free hand in Poland, the British guarantee would become meaningless. Neither the French nor the British could possibly come to Poland's aid in time to avert a quick conquest. Therefore the Poles would yield the city of Danzig and the road across the Polish corridor, which was all Hitler was demanding. Maybe later, as with Czechoslovakia, he would move in and take the rest of Poland, but not now.

When he arrived at the embassy that morning, Pug was still undecided about his report. Should he send it, or put it in the burn basket? His job, he decided at last, was intelligence, and for better or worse he had told truly what he had seen so far in Nazi Germany. He hunted up a courier who was about to leave for Washington and gave him the document for urgent delivery to the Office of Naval Intelligence.

A week later, Admiral Preble read the report and sent one page of extracts to the President. The Nazi-Soviet pact broke on the

world on the twenty-second of August, as one of the most stunning surprises in all history. On the twenty-fourth, Preble received the page back from the White House. The President had scrawled at the bottom, in strong thick pen strokes: "Let me have V. Henry's service record. FDR."

6

THE announcement of the pact shrieked at Byron and Natalie from the news placards in the busy Rome airport. They had set out from Siena before dawn and driven down along the Apennines in golden Italian sunlight, amid old mountain towns and wild, airy gorges. With Natalie at his side for a three-week journey, Byron was in the highest of spirits. Until he saw the bulletins.

At the first kiosk he bought a sheaf of newspapers. The Italian papers shrilled that this great diplomatic coup by the Axis had ended the war danger. The Paris and London headlines were big, black, and frightened. The German press giggled coarse delight. Across a Belgian front page the stark headline was: 1914?

In a crowded airport restaurant, while they lunched on cannelloni and white wine, Natalie astonished him by talking of going on. To proceed into a country that might soon be invaded by Germans struck Byron as almost mad.

But Natalie argued that they would be in and out of Poland in three weeks, and that the world wasn't going to end in that time. Even in a war, an American passport spelled safety. And she had promised Leslie Slote.

This last did not cheer Byron. Since the Palio, it had seemed that she was warming to himself. But now she was on her way to her lover, and this political explosion made no difference to her. He sat slouched in his chair, contemplating her across the checked tablecloth. The plane was departing in an hour for Zagreb, on the first leg of their flight.

She stared back at him. "Look," she said, "I can understand that for you it's no longer a gay excursion. So I'll go on by myself."

"I suggest you telephone Slote first."

"Nonsense. I'll never get a call through to Warsaw."

"Try."

"All right," she snapped.

Byron pulled Natalie through the crowd in the long-distance office. The harassed operator to whom she gave the number in Warsaw said it would be a twelve-hour wait.

"That's the number of the American embassy," Byron said, smiling at her, "and it's life and death."

He had an odd smile, half melancholy, half gay, and the Italian girl warmed to it. "I can try." She plugged, rang, and argued in German and Italian for ten minutes or more, then all at once nodded violently, pointing to a booth.

Natalie came out red-faced and scowling. "He told me I'd be insane to go on. Our diplomats are burning their papers. . . ."

"I'm sorry, Natalie, but it's what I expected."

She turned on him. "Let's see the plane tickets."

"We can get refunds." He handed her the envelope.

She extracted her ticket and gave the envelope back. "You get a refund. They burned papers before Munich too. Imagine a world war over Danzig! Who even cares about Danzig?"

"But Slote will be swamped. You won't see much of him."

"Then I'll do my sight-seeing alone. I have relatives in Warsaw, and I want to see it. It must be about time for me to check in."

He held out his hand for her ticket. "I'll check us both in."

She brightened, but looked suspicious. "You needn't come, honestly. I don't want—"

"Oh shut up, Natalie. Let's have the ticket."

She gave him a playful smile. "Well! Listen to Briny Henry being masterful. The thing is, darling, if anything does go wrong, I don't ever want to feel I dragged you into trouble."

It was the first time she had—however casually—used a term of endearment to him. Byron pulled the ticket from her hand.

THE scheduled eight-hour trip lasted a day and a half. No connections worked. They spent the night on benches in the Budapest terminal. At Warsaw, the shabby plane, on which they were the only foreigners arriving, turned right around and took off, jam-packed with people fleeing Poland.

A beefy Pole in an olive uniform, clearly regarding them as spies or lunatics, checked their passports. Byron plowed his way through throngs of refugees, found a telephone, and called the embassy. Slote was shocked to hear his voice. He appeared at the airport within the hour in a shiny blue Chevrolet that prompted stares. They piled into it and set off for the city.

Natalie looked trim and pert after a grooming in the ladies' lounge—the size of a telephone booth, she said, with one cold-water tap, and no seat on the single toilet bowl. "Does this continue, Leslie?" she said. "I mean, the farther east we've come, the smaller the airports have gotten, the more loused-up the schedules, the surlier the officials, and the cruder the johns."

"This little airport's usually half asleep, Natalie. But if you choose to take a pleasure trip at a time of general mobilization—"

"Here it comes, Briny," she said, her eyes flashing amusement.

Slote reached a caressing hand to her face. The easy, intimate gesture hurt Byron's eyes. He slumped glumly in the back seat. "I'm thrilled to see you, darling, though you're stark mad," Slote said. "Things are looking better tonight. There's reliable word from Sweden that following England's guarantee to Poland, Hitler's calling off his invasion. Don't figure on staying long, though."

"I thought maybe a week," Natalie said. "Then we can go on down to Kraków, visit Medzice, and fly back to Rome."

"Medzice! You *are* insane. Forget it, Natalie."

"Why should I? Aaron said I should visit the family. That's where we're from. My gosh, this is flat country."

"Exactly, and that's Poland's curse. It's a soccer field a hundred thousand square miles in size. Fine for invasions. Half a million German soldiers are poised at the Czech border at this moment, *only forty miles* from Medzice!"

It was strange to find Warsaw a calm metropolis at the end of such a primitive air journey. The boulevards, bordered by baroque buildings and running into great squares, made Byron think of Paris and London. The hotel where Slote had taken rooms for them was as ornate as any he had seen.

When Natalie went up in the elevator, Slote said to Byron, "This Kraków trip is dangerous nonsense. I'm going to get you on

the earliest flight to Rome I can. Don't tell Natalie tonight, though. She'll become unmanageable."

"Okay. You know her better than I do."

Slote shook his head, laughing. "I'm touched—of course I am—by this cuckoo visit, but Natalie Jastrow is too much for almost anybody. See you at dinner."

Byron sat in his cavernous room wondering what the hell he was doing in Poland. He picked up the ivory-handled telephone and, using German, managed to get connected to Natalie. "Hello. Look, I'm beat. You have dinner with Slote. I'm going to bed."

"Stop that rubbish. You're dining with us, Briny, do you hear?"

IN THE hotel dining room there was no trace of a war scare.

"Sorry I'm late. It's the Jews," Slote apologized when they sat down. "They're storming the embassy. We've all become visa officers, right on up to Ambassador Biddle. Not that I blame them."

"I've seen very few Jews," Natalie said. "I understood Warsaw was full of them."

"Oh, they're here, all right. A third of this city's Jewish." At this point the headwaiter brought a menu, and Slote had a long colloquy with him in Polish. Natalie listened with an admiring look.

"Les, is it very hard to learn?" she said, as the waiter left. "One day I'll try. My folks used to talk Polish when they didn't want me to understand. I'm haunted by a sense of being back in my childhood, and yet this is such a foreign place!"

They ate amazingly well. Then Natalie and Slote got up to dance. Byron thought Slote looked more like her uncle than her sweetheart, steering her clumsily around the floor. But her closed eyes and touching cheek weren't the ways of a niece. They exchanged a few words, then Slote looked serious and shook his head. They were arguing when they came back to the table.

"I'll find Berel without you," Natalie was saying.

"I didn't say I wouldn't help you find him. I said if you're going to talk to him about Medzice—"

"Just forget it. Forget I mentioned it."

But she was pleased when, after dinner, Slote took them in search of Aaron's cousin. They drove to another part of town:

street after narrow cobbled street of old brick houses, with Jews by the thousands strolling or arguing on street corners. Many of the men wore caftans, many others the boots and blouses of the countryside. Natalie was looking around at the horse-drawn wagons and handcarts. "My parents described all this," she said. "It seems not to have changed a bit."

Slote halted to ask directions. The Jews came clustering around, but gave only vague, cautious answers. "Let me try," Natalie said. "I can hack out Yiddish after a fashion, if I must." Her Yiddish caused an astonished outbreak of laughter and friendly talk. A boy volunteered to run ahead of the car and show the way.

He led them to a gray brick apartment building with an ornate iron door, and window boxes of geraniums. Natalie and Slote went in, leaving Byron in the car to be stared at by curious children, their faces full of life and mischief. He wished he had gifts for them. He took out his fountain pen and offered it to a little girl in a lilac dress. She hung back, blinking wary brown eyes. At last, encouraged by shouts and giggles from the others, she took the pen and ran lightly away as Natalie and Slote came back.

"Just my luck," Natalie said. "Berel's gone to Medzice for his son's wedding." Berel had sent the boy to attend the Kraków yeshiva, closer to the family village, and had found him a bride among the second cousins. "Berel's evidently well-off. Aaron told me he deals in mushrooms, but can that be such a good business?"

"Apparently." Slote was starting the car. "This must be the best apartment house around here."

The little girl in lilac reappeared, leading her parents. The father, in a gray frock coat and a wide-brimmed hat, spoke gravely in Polish, holding the pen. "He's thanking you," Slote said to Byron, "but he says please take it back, it's too expensive."

"Tell him the American fell in love with his daughter. She's the most beautiful girl in the world, and she must keep it."

The parents laughed when Slote translated. The girl shrank against her mother and shot Byron an ardent look. The mother, kerchiefed and wearing a tailored suit, undid from her lapel a gold brooch with purple stones and pressed it on Natalie, who tried to decline it, speaking in Yiddish.

Again this caused surprise and a cascade of jocund talk, the upshot of which was that she had to keep the brooch. They drove off to shouted farewells.

NATALIE telephoned Byron in his room at seven one morning, after they had stayed up till past three touring nightclubs with Slote. "Hi, Briny!" From her chipper note, she might have had ten hours' sleep. "This is playing sort of dirty, but I have two seats on a plane to Kraków at eleven. If you'd rather just stay here, okay."

Half awake, Byron said, "What? Slote's got us on the plane to Rome tomorrow, and those seats were mighty hard to come by."

"I know. I'll leave him a note. Maybe I'll phone him from the airport. If you come, we can go straight to Rome from Kraków, Saturday or Sunday, after I visit my family. Byron! Have you fallen back asleep?"

Byron was calculating the advantages of leaving Warsaw and Slote against these harebrained travel arrangements. The war crisis seemed to be abating, and the tone of Radio Warsaw's voice now sounded less worried. He said, "Have you heard any news?"

"I just got BBC. Ambassador Henderson's talking to Hitler."

"Natalie, this would be a damned wild excursion."

"Why? I'll probably never have another chance to see where my parents were born. Anyway, you don't have to come."

"Well, I'll have breakfast with you."

Byron packed fast. The more time he spent with Natalie Jastrow the more she puzzled him. She treated Slote with the loving warmth of a fiancée; yet when Byron tried to withdraw from their company, she made him come along. But about her fascination with the Jewish streets of Warsaw there was no question. No matter where they started an evening, they ended in those narrow byways. Evidently Medzice was drawing her in the same way.

She was waiting outside the restaurant. She wore a bright Polish dress and had combed her hair down as the Warsaw women did. Byron joined her, carrying his suitcase. "You're coming!" she said. "Honestly, Briny, you're as goofy as I am."

After breakfast, a rickety taxi took them to the airport. There Natalie tried to telephone Slote, but he was not in his apartment

nor at the embassy. The rusty-looking plane took off with bumps and shudders that slightly parted the metal floor plates, admitting a jet of air that billowed Natalie's full skirt. She tucked it under her and fell asleep. After about an hour and a half they landed in a sunny field. They were glad to leave the plane, which reeked of hot iron and gasoline. On either side of the tarred landing strip kerchiefed peasant women were mowing hay. There were no taxis near the wooden hut that was the Kraków terminal.

A brown-bearded Jew in a long dark coat drew near, touching his wide-brimmed hat. "You excuse? Americans? Jastrow?"

"Why, yes," Natalie said. And in Yiddish, "You are Berel?"

"Yes, yes," he said, smiling. "Jochanan Berel Jastrow." He had a broad nose, heavy eyebrows, and surprisingly blue, deep-set eyes with an almost Tartar slant.

"Byron, this is Uncle Aaron's cousin. Byron Henry is a good friend of mine, Berel."

Berel led them to a rust-pitted orange car on the other side of the shed, said something to the driver, and they set off. Natalie explained to Byron that they were going straight to Medzice; the city of Kraków was twenty miles the other way. She added that she had telegraphed yesterday to "Jochanan Jastrow, Medzice," but had scarcely expected the wire to reach him. The family, Jastrow told them, regarded it as a wonderful omen that the American cousin was falling on them from the skies the day before the wedding. He would arrange for their return to Rome the day after tomorrow, by train or air from Kraków.

Swerving to avoid a pig or cow, the car bounced along a bad tar road through villages of straw-thatched log houses, each village with its wooden church standing on a knoll. In the sun-flooded fields, women and men toiled with hand implements or horse-drawn plows. At a town called Oświęcim the car stopped, and Natalie got out with Berel and phoned Slote.

Slote, it appeared, was both furious and alarmed about their departure. "I think he's got a case of nerves," Natalie said, as they drove on. "You don't suppose he's afraid of the Germans?"

"Hitler a big bluff," Berel spoke up in English. "Strong pipple, the Polish. No war."

Medzice was a cluster of houses on narrow cobbled streets sloping down to a winding river. Though the usual church stood on the usual knoll, the villagers were almost all Jews. At least half of the houses seemed to be inhabited by Jastrows. They swarmed on Natalie and Byron and marched them joyously from home to home. On table after table appeared wine, cake, tea, hard candies, vodka, and fish, which there was no polite way to refuse. Though Byron never understood a word that was said, the people were as cordial to him as to Natalie. The visit of the two Americans was obviously one of the grandest events in Medzice since the World War.

What a world! Byron thought. No sight or sound to connect it with the twentieth century. Yet Natalie Jastrow was only one generation removed from this place, and the urbane Dr. Aaron Jastrow had lived here until his fifteenth year!

Byron's sleeping arrangements were as novel as everything else. After a tremendous discussion, he was borne off to the rabbi's house by an escort of handclapping yeshiva boys led by the bridegroom himself, a wispy lad of eighteen or so. The rabbi and his wife tried to give Byron their own bed, but since it was obviously the only large bed in the house, he wouldn't have it. This caused another grand parley in Yiddish, and he ended up sleeping on a feather mattress on the floor of the main room, where six boys from the Kraków yeshiva had similar mattresses.

The wedding next day made Byron wish he were a writer and could record it—a Jew and could comprehend it. The mixture of solemnity and boisterousness baffled him. To him, a wedding was essentially decorous, but the Medzice Jews crowded, danced and sang. They surrounded the veiled, silent, seated bride and discussed her vehemently. The bridegroom, in a white robe and a black hat, looked on the verge of fainting. Byron accidentally learned, offering him a plate of cakes at the long men's table, that the weedy boy had been fasting for twenty-four hours and still was, while everybody around him ate heartily.

But near midnight a sudden gravity fell on the guests. In a courtyard, with the bright moon and a blaze of stars overhead, in a series of stern and impressive acts—including solemn incantations over silver goblets of wine and the lighting of long tapers—

the bride and groom were brought together for a ring ceremony and a kiss under a hand-held canopy of purple velvet. Then the groom ground a wineglass under his heel. Jubilation broke out once more and continued far into the morning hours.

Byron scarcely remembered falling asleep on the floor of the rabbi's house. But there he was when a hand shook him. He opened his eyes. Berel Jastrow was bending over him, and all around him the yeshiva boys were sitting up or already dressing.

"*Der Deutsches,*" the Jew said urgently. "*De Chormans.*"

Byron sat up. "The Germans? What about them?"

"Dey comink."

7

WORLD EMPIRE LOST

by General Armin von Roon

Translator's Foreword by Victor Henry

I never expected to translate a German military work. Upon retiring from the navy after World War II, I became a consultant to a marine engineering firm. Then, on my last business trip to Germany, in 1965, I noticed in bookstores a small book called "World Empire Lost" by General Armin von Roon. I remembered von Roon from my days as naval attaché to the American embassy in Berlin. He was then in the Armed Forces Operation Staff. He had a distant, forbidding manner, but he was obviously brilliant, and I had always wanted to know him better. Out of curiosity I bought a copy of his book.

I found "World Empire Lost" absorbing. I discovered that it had not been translated into English, and on my return to the States I induced the present publishers to acquire the English language rights. I was planning then to retire from business, and I thought that translating this book might ease the pain of putting myself out to pasture.

Its history is this: General von Roon, in prison (he got twenty years at Nuremberg), wrote an exhaustive two-volume analysis of the war. He prefaced his account of each major campaign with a note on its strategic and political background. It is these prefaces, issued separately after von Roon's death, that constitute "World Empire Lost."

The book is, therefore, not solid military history but rather a sampling of von Roon's version of the events. It is also a remarkably frank and calm revelation of how Germans really felt about Hitler's war.

I found I could not translate certain passages without challenging them. Von Roon starts, for instance—as Hitler started all his speeches—by denouncing the Versailles Treaty as an injustice imposed on an honorable Germany by the cruel Allies. He does not mention the historic catch to that. In 1917—more than a year before Versailles—Lenin in Russia overthrew the Kerensky government and sued for a separate peace with Germany. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, dictated by the Germans, deprived Russia of a territory much larger than France and England combined, and of almost all her heavy industry. It was far harsher than the Versailles Treaty.

The Germans I knew were sincerely puzzled by this comparison. The Treaty of Versailles had happened to them; Brest-Litovsk had happened to the other fellow. I cannot explain this national quirk, but the reader should remember it in reading "World Empire Lost." He will also have to grow used to the German habit of blaming other countries for getting themselves invaded by Germany.

—Victor Henry

27 May 1966

The Attack on Poland

In writing this book, I have only one aim: to defend the honor of the German soldier.

When the victorious Allies in 1919 created the crazy Treaty of Versailles, partitioning Germany and making an economic and political madhouse of Europe, they also created Adolf Hitler. For the oppression of Versailles built up a volcanic resentment in the German people, and Hitler rode to power on the crest of its eruption. The Nazi Party was united on the ideal of a resurgent Germany and—unfortunately—on the political slogan of anti-Semitism. A riffraff of vulgar agitators, fanatics, opportunists, and bullies (some of them extremely able) swept into power with Hitler. We of the General Staff for the most part looked on with distaste and foreboding.

But Hitler surprised us. Swiftly, without bloodshed, he repaired one injustice of Versailles after another. His methods were direct and strong—and they worked. Inside Germany, he was equally harsh when necessary—but popular, for he brought prosperity and he rearmed us.

Though he usurped much power, his burning belief in himself and in his mission swayed the German masses.

Naturally, this swift renaissance of Germany created dismay among the Allies. In ascending to mastery of Europe, Germany was once more challenging England for world rule. Nothing could avert a showdown, for Germany early in the twentieth century had passed England in both population and industrial plant. The only questions were when and under what circumstances would England intervene.

Already in 1937 we of the German General Staff had prepared a plan for a two-front war against England and Poland, which we called Case Red. We kept updating it as Hitler scored one bloodless victory after another, and even began to hope that the forceful Führer might bring his new order to Europe without bloodshed. Had this occurred, he could have launched his grand crusade against the Soviet Union for living space in the east—the aim of his life—as a one-front war. But on March 31, 1939, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, suddenly gave Poland a guarantee of military assistance—a piece of suicidal stupidity which stiffened the corrupt Poles in their resistance to Germany's just grievances and also spurred the Führer to greater boldness. Down came the word to the General Staff to prepare an operation order for an attack on Poland in the fall. On April 5 the new plan went to the Führer under the new code name Case White.

The Polish strategic situation in 1939 was poor. Flanked by East Prussia to the north and German-held Czechoslovakia to the south, this wholly flat land lay open to a thrust from Germany to the west, while in the east the Soviet Union stood poised. Hitler now took advantage of the British failure to negotiate with Russia. Against his own ideals and his most cherished long-run aims, he sent Ribbentrop to engineer the nonaggression pact with Moscow—thereby, he hoped, securing his eastern flank.

Hailed as a triumph of diplomacy, this treaty all but lost Germany the Second World War before a shot was fired. For a secret protocol handed Stalin the Baltic States and about half of Poland, allowing the Slav horde to march two hundred kilometers nearer Germany. Two years later we paid the price. In December 1941 our drive toward Moscow was halted forty kilometers from its goal. Had our forces jumped off from a line two hundred kilometers nearer the Russian capital, they would have taken it and won the campaign. England would have made peace then, and we would have won the war.

No member of the armed forces, including Hitler's own chief of staff,

Keitel, and the chief of operations, Jodl, knew this secret protocol existed. It was only in the third week of the Polish campaign, when Stalin angrily telephoned Ribbentrop complaining about our advance into the southeast oil area, that the Wehrmacht received its specific chop lines and retreated before the Russians, who airily rolled in without shedding a drop of blood.

We had, from the first, felt misgivings about Case White, because our combat readiness was much below par for a major conflict. The Führer would not order full wartime production, knowing it would be an unpopular move. Carried away by his own playacting of "peace talks" with the British ambassador, he apparently believed that England might be bluffed into another Munich. We at Supreme Headquarters could see that he was surprised and shaken when, following our attack on Poland on September 1, the western declarations of war came through. But by then there was nothing to do but go ahead.

The gods, however, smiled on us. The Poles proved as inept in their strategic dispositions as they were brave in the field. And the French scarcely made a move, though there is no doubt that, in September, France could have sent millions of well-trained soldiers, with more armored divisions than the Wehrmacht had in Poland, crashing out of the Maginot fortresses, and rolled straight to Berlin. But the will was not there. Hitler's gamble on this vital point proved brilliant.

The first phase of our Polish breakthrough took four days and achieved complete tactical surprise. The Polish air force was destroyed on the ground, and thereafter the Luftwaffe freely roamed the skies. Ground resistance was moderate to heavy, and our field commanders had to admire the bold but hopeless charges of Polish horsemen against our tank formations.

By September 21 Warsaw was ringed by Wehrmacht forces. Yet it was not until the twenty-seventh that the city, under a round-the-clock rain of shells and bombs, without food, water, or light, with disease spreading, finally gave up its vain hopes of last-minute deliverance from the west, and surrendered.

The Führer played down the Polish campaign as a local police action, personally canceling many sections of Case White dealing with rationing, troop mobilization, and transport, in order to soften the impact on the German people. (I may say that due to perpetual interference by party and Führer, the war effort was never, by professional standards, organized fully or properly.) But the war went on, and its inept starting point was soon all but forgotten.

GERMAN ARMY ATTACKS POLAND . . .

The New York Times, raising its voice to suit the occasion in its eight-column once-in-a-generation italic headlines, topped the sprawl of newspapers on the desk under Hugh Cleveland's stockinged feet. Tilted back in a swivel chair, a telephone receiver cradled on his shoulder, Cleveland was making notes on a sheaf of yellow paper as he talked. His voice was angry. His morning radio show, *Who's in Town*, featured interviews with celebrities passing through New York. The war crisis, suddenly roaring into the Columbia Broadcasting System, had snatched off his secretary to the newsroom for emergency service, and he was protesting for the third time that morning to the personnel office.

A young-looking girl in a straw hat appeared in the open doorway. "Mr. Cleveland?" Her voice was sweet but shaky. "The personnel office sent me up to you."

"You? How old are you?"

"Twenty."

Cleveland hung up the telephone. "What's your name?"

"Madeline Henry."

Cleveland sighed. "Well, okay, Madeline. If you're in the pool, you must know the ropes. First get me a cup of coffee and a chicken sandwich, please. Then there's tomorrow's script"—he rapped the yellow sheets—"to be typed over."

Madeline could bluff no further. She was in New York to buy clothes. The war news had prompted her to walk into CBS to see if extra girls were needed. In the personnel office a harried woman, after a few questions about her schooling, had sent her to Cleveland. Stepping inside, Madeline confessed that she lived in Washington and had to go back to school in three weeks. Cleveland smiled and surveyed her with eyes half closed.

"Well, Madeline, what does it add up to?"

"Couldn't I work for you until I go back to school? My father will kill me when he finds out, but I don't care."

"Where's your father? In Washington?"

"In Berlin. He's the naval attaché there."

"What?" Hugh Cleveland took his feet off the desk. "So your father is our naval attaché in Nazi Germany. Imagine that!" He handed her a five-dollar bill. "All right, Madeline, the sandwich. White meat, lettuce, mayonnaise. Black coffee. Then we'll talk."

"Yes, Mr. Cleveland." Madeline rushed out to the hall, dazed to be working for a real broadcaster! A girl swishing by with a bag of food told her where to buy sandwiches across Madison Avenue.

Outside, the New York scene was normal, except that the news vendors were crying war. Madeline bought an afternoon paper, scanned the dramatic front page, and felt a quickening in her veins. The President had announced, firmly, that America was staying out of it. But things would be different from now on, for her especially if she could just get this job! She picked up the sandwich and hurried back.

Cleveland was telephoning again, a flirtatious smirk on his face. He nodded at Madeline and, as he went on coaxing some girl to meet him at Toots Shor's restaurant, he wolfed the sandwich.

"Okay," he said when he hung up. "Now. You want to work for me for three weeks." He waved an envelope at her. "Gary Cooper is at the St. Regis, room 641. This is a sample *Who's in Town* script. Take it to him. We may get him for Thursday."

"Gary COOPER? You mean the MOVIE star?"

"Who else? He may ask about the show, so get this. We work without an audience in a very relaxed little studio, the same one Mrs. Roosevelt uses for her show. He can take five minutes or fifteen. The whole show runs an hour and a half. Anyway, act as if you know—and for God's sake don't ask for his autograph."

A MAID opened the door of the hotel suite where Gary Cooper, in a gray suit, sat eating lunch. He rose, immensely tall and slim, smiling down at Madeline. He glanced over the script and asked a few businesslike questions; he was far from a bashful cowboy. She described the show; then almost at once, it seemed, she was out on the sunny street again, thrilled to her bones.

"Bless your little heart," Cleveland said, as she came into the

office. "Cooper just called. He likes the idea and he's in. I'm off to interview him now. First go down to Personnel and fill out your papers. Then there's tomorrow's script. Do a smooth copy of the red-checked pages and get it mimeographed in room 309A." Cleveland rose. She was a bit disappointed to see that though he could not be more than thirty-one or so, his stomach bulged. But when he grinned at her, she felt she would do anything for him.

He paused at the door. "Do you mind working nights? You'll get paid overtime. If you come back around eight thirty, you'll find Thursday's rough on my desk, with the Cooper spot."

After five hours' toil Madeline turned in the script, hoping her messy work would not end her radio career. At the employment office she had learned she was starting at thirty-five dollars a week—a fortune. She took her aching back to the drugstore, had a quick meal, and walked back to CBS. On Cleveland's desk the interview with Gary Cooper now lay, a mass of typing, scrawls, and cuts. The note clipped to it said, "Try to copy it all over tonight. See you around ten." Madeline groaned; she was terribly tired.

She put in a call to Warren at the Pensacola flying school. An operator with a southern accent said she'd track him down and have him call back. In the smoky newsroom across the hall the din of typewriters never stopped. Through the open door Madeline heard contradictory rumors: Poland was already collapsing, Hitler was offering to visit Chamberlain.

The telephone rang at ten o'clock and there was Warren on the line, with music and laughter in the background. He was at the beach club, he said, at a moonlight dance on a terrace lined with palm trees. He had just met a marvelous girl, the daughter of a congressman. Madeline asked about the flying, which he said was great, and then told him about the CBS job.

"I've heard *Who's in Town*," Warren said, impressed. "What's Hugh Cleveland like?"

"Oh, very nice. Warren, will Dad be furious?"

"You'll be back at school before he even knows about it. Where will you stay? . . . Oh, yes, that all-women hotel, I know."

"You don't object?"

"Me? I think it's fine. Just be a good girl, and all that."

Madeline had barely hung up when Cleveland walked in, accompanied by a tall beauty whose gardenia perfume was too strong for the small office. Cleveland glanced at the pages Madeline had typed. "Need a little practice, eh? Now look, do you by any chance know of some admiral named Stewart Preble?"

"Preble! Why, he's the chief of naval operations!"

"That's right. I just found out he's at the Warwick. Take this letter." He leaned on the desk and started to dictate. Madeline desperately tried to keep up, but had to ask him to go slower.

"Don't you know shorthand?"

"I can learn it quickly enough."

Cleveland glanced at his watch and at the beauty, who drooped her eyelids contemptuously at Madeline. "Look," Cleveland said, "you know these navy characters. Just write him an invitation to come on the Thursday morning show. Sign my name and take it over to the Warwick. You can do that, can't you?"

"Certainly."

"Okay. See you in the morning, not later than eight. I go on at nine, you know."

As HE had told Madeline, Warren was dancing away this first night of the war with a congressman's pretty daughter. Everyone said it was the best club dance in years. The big headlines, the excited radio broadcasts, had created a pleasurable stir in quiet Pensacola. The student aviators felt more important and the girls found them more glamorous. The talk about the German attack soon gave way to homier topics, however. Der Führer, for these happy people, remained the queer hoarse German of the newsreels, with the funny mustache, who could scarcely menace the United States just yet.

Lieutenant (jg.) Henry took a different view. At the Academy he had excelled on the subject of the World War. Now, the invasion of Poland really interested him, and that was how he first caught the interest of Janice Lacouture. Tall, blond, with a striking figure, she was one of the belles of Pensacola. Warren took her to sit in a far corner of the terrace, but instead of making a pass at her he told her how von Moltke had fatally tampered with the German

plan to capture Paris, and of parallels between 1914 and 1939. Janice, too, was knowledgeable about history and politics, and they had an exciting talk, the sort in which lovers sometimes discover each other without speaking a romantic word.

The Lacoutures were solidly rich, from two generations in the timbering that had helped destroy the Gulf pine forests, but Janice's father was the first one to enter politics. Janice herself wanted to marry a public man—a senator, a governor, or, with luck, perhaps a future President. This was hard on her Pensacola summer dates, who fell for her beauty and chic, and she had acquired a reputation for frostiness which amused her. But there was something different about Warren Henry, with those penetrating eyes, that bony ramshackle frame, and the easy smile with its hint of shrewdness and immorality. They stopped talking after a while and danced close-hugged in the moonlight.

When Warren returned to the bachelor officers' quarters he found a telephone message from Helene Tarrasch, the thirty-year-old Baltimore divorcée for whom he had risked expulsion from the Academy. Helene wasn't a bad woman, simply a lonely one; Warren had grown attached to her, and had made the mistake of asking her to come to Pensacola. Now she was installed at the San Carlos Hotel as the hostess in the main dining room.

How obsolete she suddenly was! Not only because of Janice Lacouture but because Warren now believed the United States would be at war within a year; in his mind his future had taken shape, and included golden postwar fantasies. Beyond the navy, being a political leader attracted him. His father's ambition, he knew, was flag rank in the navy. Warren wanted that, but why not dream of more? This day had opened up his future, and had produced the perfect partner for that future.

He walked to the window of his room, and looking out at the moon, he whispered a prayer to God. "Let me have her, and let me be a good naval aviator. I don't ask you to let me live, I know that's up to me, and the numbers, but if I do get through the war, then"—he smiled at the star-splashed sky—"well, then we'll see. All right?" Warren was charming God.

He went to bed without telephoning Mrs. Tarrasch.

SHORTLY BEFORE SIX a.m. a ring from the embassy woke Victor Henry. The chargé was summoning an urgent staff meeting on the outbreak of the war. It was no great surprise, but all the same, Pug was excited and moved. He jumped out of bed to go to work in a new era. It wasn't his war, the one he had been training for all his life, but he was fairly sure it would be.

In the library he switched on the radio. A strident voice was describing the Polish "attack" at Gleiwitz, which, according to the broadcast, had sent the Wehrmacht rolling two million strong into Poland "in self-defense." Obviously an invasion of this size had been surging irreversibly toward Poland for days; but Radio Berlin's propaganda no longer surprised Pug.

Rhoda came yawning in, tying her negligee. "Well! So he really went and did it. We're not going to get in it, are we?"

"I'm not even sure England and France will go to bat."

"How about the children, Pug?"

"Well, Warren and Madeline are no problem. The word is that Italy won't fight, so Byron should be okay, too."

Rhoda said slowly, "World War Two . . . it has a funny ring. Unreal, somehow. Say, what happens to our dinner for that tycoon from Colorado? What's his name?"

"Dr. Kirby. He may not get here now, Rhoda."

"Dear, please find out. I have guests coming, and extra help and food, you know."

"I'll do my best."

The staff meeting was somber and short. The chargé urged everyone to preserve a correct tone of neutrality, for the lives of a lot of English and French people caught in Germany might later depend on it. After the meeting, Pug attacked his in tray and told his yeoman to try to track down Dr. Palmer Kirby, the electrical engineer from Colorado who bore a "very important" designation from the Bureau of Ordnance.

Alistair Tudsbury telephoned. "Hullo! Would you like to hear the bad man explain all to the Reichstag? I can get you into the press box. I owe you something for that glimpse of Swinemünde."

"You don't owe me anything, but I'll sure come."

"Good. This is my last story from Berlin. I have my marching

papers and we're leaving directly after the speech. Unless we get interned. Well, Pam will call for you at two."

The yeoman came in and handed Pug a telegram. He opened it and got a shock: DO YOU KNOW WHEREABOUTS YOUR SON BYRON AND MY NIECE NATALIE. PLEASE WIRE OR CALL. It was signed AARON JASTROW, with an address and telephone number in Siena.

"Here," Pug said to the yeoman. "Try to get a call through to this man in Siena. Also wire him: 'No knowledge. Please wire last known whereabouts.'"

He decided not to tell Rhoda. Unable to work, he was about to leave for lunch when the telephone rang. He heard multilingual jabber and then a cultured American voice. "Commander Henry? Aaron Jastrow. It's very good of you to call."

"Dr. Jastrow, I thought I'd better tell you immediately that I had no idea Byron and your niece weren't with you."

"I hesitated to wire, but I thought you could help locate them. Two weeks ago they went to Warsaw."

"Warsaw!"

"Yes, Natalie went to visit a friend in our embassy. The second secretary, Leslie Slote. It was risky, I guess, but she has quite a will of her own. Byron volunteered to go with her. That's really why I refuse to worry. He's a very capable young man."

Pug, dazed by the news, still found pleasure in this good word for Byron. Over the years he had not heard many. "Thanks. I'll get on to it right away. If you get any word, let me know."

"I hope we'll meet one day," Jastrow said. "It would give me pleasure to know Byron's father. He worships you."

PAMELA was waiting for him in front of the embassy near the line of sad-looking Jews—would-be refugees—that stretched around the block. She wore the gray suit of their morning walk on the *Bremen*. "Well," Pug said, "so the little tramp went."

She gave him a flattered look. "Didn't he ever! Here's our car."

She drove in nervous zigzags through side streets to get around a long convoy of tanks. "I'm sorry to see you go," Pug said. "I'll miss your fireball style at the wheel. Where to next?"

"My guess is the U.S.A. It'll be the number one spot now."

"Pamela, don't you have a young man in London, or several, who object to your being so much on the move?"

The girl looked flushed and sparkling-eyed. "Oh, not at the moment. And Talky needs me since his eyes have got so bad."

"Pamela, if you're going to the States, I have a son I hope you'll meet." He told her about Warren.

She listened with a crooked smile. "Is he like you?"

"Not in the least. He's personable, sharp as a tack, and very attractive to the ladies."

"Indeed? Don't you have another son?"

"Yes." He hesitated, and then he told Pamela what he had not yet told his wife—where Byron was, and why. He added that Byron had a cat's way of getting out of trouble.

"He sounds like the one I'd enjoy meeting. Well, here we are."

Tudsbury stood on a corner, waving. "Hello, my dear fellow! Pam, be back at this corner at four and wait, won't you?"

They were met by a young German in a business suit. He took them past SS men up to the crowded press balcony of the Kroll Opera House, which the Nazis were using for state meetings until Hitler's massive new Reichstag was finished. The stylized gold eagle perched on a swastika behind the podium, with gold rays shooting out to cover the whole wall, had an air of theatrical impermanence which seemed to be a Nazi trademark.

The deputies were streaming to their seats. On the stage, Göring appeared in a sky-blue heavily medaled uniform with flaring buff lapels. He stood with feet spread apart, hands on belted hips, talking gravely with a knot of generals and party men, then took his seat. Hitler simply walked in, holding the manuscript of his speech in a red leather folder. There was none of the heavy theatricalism of his party rally entrances.

Pug thought the Führer spoke badly. He was gray with fatigue, and his speech rehashed the iniquity of the Versailles Treaty, his own unending efforts for peace, and the bloody belligerence of the Poles. He shouted that 1918 would not recur, that this time Germany would triumph or go down fighting. In a while he'd worked up to the flamboyant gestures, and all the Germans sat with the round eyes and tense faces of children watching a magi-

cian. Oddly, the Führer himself seemed a bit rattled. He spoke of falling in battle, of Göring and Hess succeeding him.

This, Pug thought, must be one of the oddest state documents in the history of warfare. His mind turned to Byron, somewhere in Poland, a speck of unimportance in this big show.

WHEN Pug got back to the embassy after saying good-by to the Tudsbury's, he found a man in a pepper-and-salt suit sitting in his outer office. Pug did not realize how big he was until he stood up; he was six feet three or so and he stooped, as if a little ashamed of his height. "Commander Henry? I'm Palmer Kirby," he said. "If you're busy just throw me out."

"Not at all. Welcome. How'd you get here?"

"Well, it took some doing. I had to dodge around through Belgium and Norway. Some planes are flying, some aren't." Kirby had a pale face with a long nose and a large loose mouth; altogether an ugly man, with clever wrinkled eyes and a sad look. Pug sized him up with relief as a serious fellow out to get a job done. A dinner and some industrial contacts would take care of him.

The yeoman said, "Sir, two priority messages on your desk."

"Very well. Come in, Dr. Kirby."

The first message had been sent that day from Warsaw: BYRON HENRY NATALIE JASTROW SCHEDULED LEAVE KRAKOW TODAY FOR BUCHAREST AND ROME. ENDEAVORING CONFIRM DEPARTURE. SLOTE.

This dispatch gave Pug an evil qualm. Radio Berlin was claiming a victorious thrust toward Kraków after an air bombardment. The other message was from the chargé: "Please see me at once."

Victor Henry apologized to Kirby and walked down the hall to the chargé's office. The chargé waved him to an armchair. "You're wanted in Washington," he said.

"SecNav?" Pug blurted.

"No. State Department, German desk. You're to proceed by fastest available transportation, highest priority, stay not more than one week, and then return here. Nothing in writing."

For twenty-five years Victor Henry had not made a move like this without a sheaf of papers from the Navy Department. State had no jurisdiction over him. Still, an attaché had a queer,

shadowy status. He smiled. "This is somewhat unusual. If I have nothing in writing, how do I get air priorities?"

"You'll get them. You sent in a report, I understand, on the combat readiness of Nazi Germany. That may have something to do with it. Anyway, it seems you're to pack a toothbrush and go."

Pug stood. "Right. I'll leave tonight. What's the late word on England and France?"

"Chamberlain's addressing Parliament tonight. My guess is the war will be on before you get back."

Pug found Dr. Kirby, long legs sprawled, reading a German industrial journal. "Sorry, Dr. Kirby, but I'll have to turn you over to Colonel Forrest, our military attaché," he said. "I'm leaving town for a week. Can you give me an idea of what you're after?"

Dr. Kirby handed him a typewritten sheet.

"No problem," Pug said, scanning it. "I know most of these people. I imagine Colonel Forrest does, too. Now, Mrs. Henry has planned a dinner for Tuesday evening. As a matter of fact"—he tapped the sheet—"Dr. Witten will be one of the guests."

"Won't your wife prefer to call it off? I'm not really much on dinner parties."

"Neither am I, but a German's a different person in his office from the one he is after a few glasses of wine. So dinners are useful." Pug smiled. "Let me take you across the hall to Colonel Forrest. Maybe he and his wife will host the dinner. We'll see."

DRIVING home, Pug thought about how to handle Rhoda and whether to tell her that Byron was missing. She was not at home. By the time she got back, he was strapping shut his suitcases. "Now what on earth?" she said breezily. Her hair was whirled and curled. They had been invited to an opera party that evening.

"Come out in the garden." When they were well away from the house, he told her about Washington. "If the Clippers keep flying, I should be back by the fifteenth."

"Oh, Lord. When do you go? Tomorrow?"

"No, they've got me on a plane to Rotterdam at eight tonight."

"Tonight!" Vexation distorted Rhoda's face. "You mean we don't even get to go to the opera? Oh, damn! I'm not going un-

escorted. And what about that Kirby fellow? How can I entertain a person I haven't even met?"

"The opera may not be on, and the Forrests will be co-hosting the Kirby dinner. BuOrd wants the red carpet out for him."

They were sitting on a marble bench beside a small fountain. Rhoda looked around at the close-clipped lawn, and said in a calmer tone, "All right. I've been planning cocktails out here. It'll be nice at that. Sorry you'll miss it."

"Bill Forrest said nobody puts on dinners like you."

Rhoda laughed. "Oh, well. You'll soon be back. You'll see Made-line. And you can telephone Warren. I'm glad Byron's up in the Italian hills. *He'll* be all right, unless he marries that Jewish girl. But he won't. He seems crazier than he is." She put her hand in her husband's. "Inherits it from his mother. Sorry I threw my little fit, dear. You know me." Claspng her hand tight, Pug decided not to upset her further with the news of Byron's disappearance.

9

BYRON was changing a tire by the roadside when he was strafed. He and Natalie were out of Kraków and heading for Warsaw in the rust-pitted taxi, together with Berel Jastrow, the bridal couple, the bearded little driver, and his inconveniently fat wife.

Berel had somehow obtained two train tickets from Kraków to Warsaw and had shipped off his wife and twelve-year-old daughter. But air traffic was finished and trains were becoming unpredictable, so he could not arrange to get Byron and Natalie safely out of Poland. He had therefore asked his poor relative, the taxi driver Yankel, to take them all to Warsaw. Yankel was willing; and his wife merely insisted on bringing their bedding and kitchenware, roped to the car top. So they had set forth: seven of them jammed in the rusty car.

They spent the first night in a town where Jastrow had friends. They ate well, slept on the floor, and were off again at dawn. The narrow roads were filling with people on foot, and horse-drawn wagons piled with household goods. Marching soldiers now and then forced the car off the road. The clear weather, the smell

of the ripening corn, made the travelers feel good, though the sun as it climbed got too hot. There were no combatants in sight on the road where they'd stopped to change the tire, when a lone airplane dived from the sky, making a hard stuttering noise. It flew so low that Byron could see its painted numbers, black crosses, and swastika. The bullets fell on people, livestock, and the household goods in the carts. Byron felt a burning and stinging in one ear. He was not aware of toppling into the dirt.

He heard a child crying and opened his eyes. The blood on his clothes surprised him—big, bright red stains—and he felt a warm trickle on his face. Natalie knelt beside him, sponging his head with a sodden red handkerchief. Across the road, a little girl screamed while a Pole in ragged clothes patted her head.

"Are you all right, Byron? How do you feel?" Natalie's face was dirty and her forehead was smeared with Byron's blood.

"Sort of dizzy, but okay." He got to his feet. "How does it look?"

"I don't know—it's bleeding a lot. We'd better get you to a hospital and have it stitched."

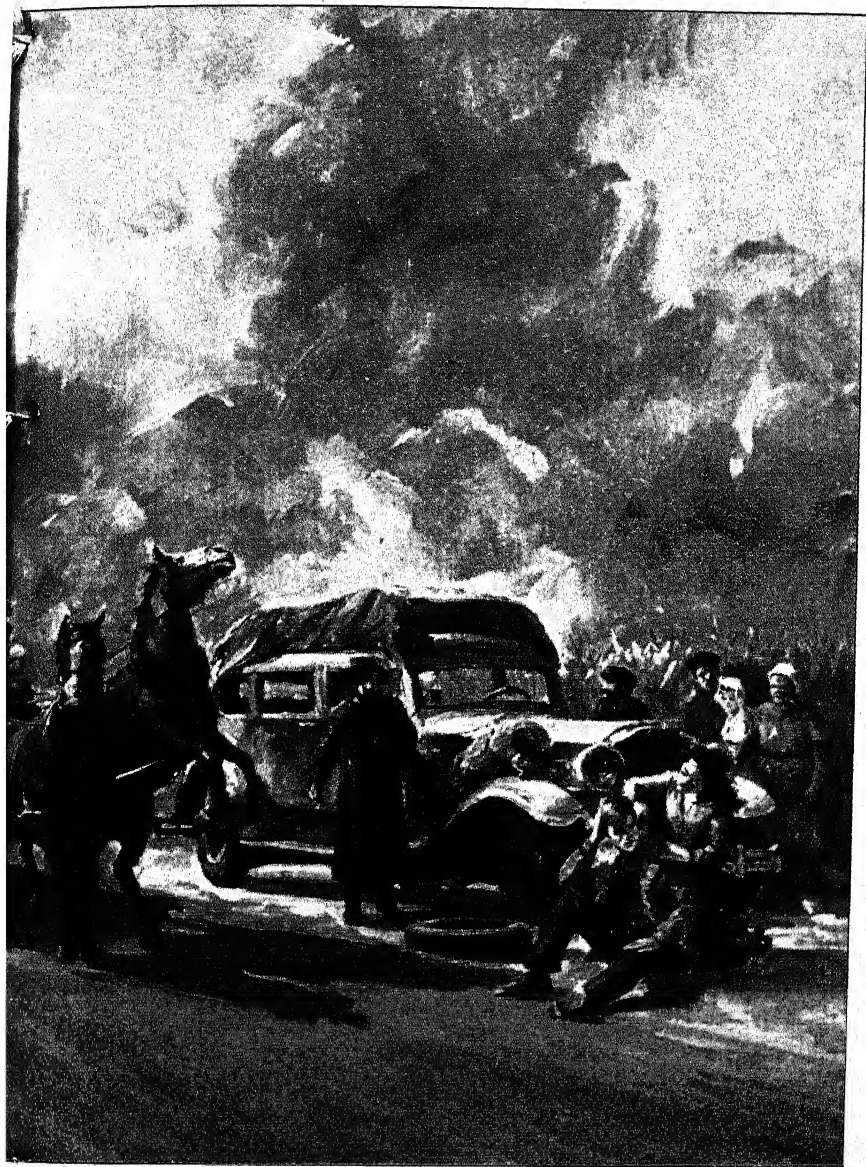
The driver, replacing the wheel, smiled at Byron. His wife and the bridal couple stood with a look of shock on their faces.

Byron, followed by Natalie and Jastrow, walked to the crying girl, whose mother had caught a bullet in the forehead. The big red hole was an especially bad sight because her staring eyes were undamaged. Berel spoke to the father, and the man shrugged, holding the little girl close. Yankel's wife gave the child an apple. She bit into it and her sobbing died away. The man sat by his dead wife and began to mutter, crossing himself.

Natalie helped Byron into the car and they drove on. A little farther on there was a good-sized town, where Jastrow told the authorities about the wounded on the highway. At the hospital, Byron's head was treated by a fat old doctor. The shaving of the hair around the wound was worse than the actual stitching.

It took them two days to go the rest of the way to Warsaw. While it was happening, it seemed to Byron a saga that he would be telling his grandchildren, if he lived through it. But so much happened afterward that the whole three-hundred-kilometer drive





soon became a garbled, fading memory. He always remembered how sick to the stomach he was, and the embarrassment of his frequent excursions into the bushes; and Natalie's unshakable good cheer as she got hungrier, dirtier, and wearier.

They arrived in the outskirts of Warsaw in the chill dawn, crawling among hundreds of horse-drawn wagons. The buildings cluttered against the pink northeast horizon looked like the heavenly Jerusalem. Three hours later the groaning, clanking car reached the embassy. A lone marine stood watch at the closed gates. Gray sandbags lined the yellow stucco walls, and on the red tile roof an enormous American flag had been painted. "Go ahead, go in quickly," Berel said to Natalie in Yiddish, stepping out of the car to kiss her. "Come and see me later if you can."

When Byron said good-by, Berel clasped his hand and looked earnestly into his face. "Very much tank you," he said. "America save Poland, yes, Byron? Save de world."

Byron laughed. "That's a big order, Berel."

The marine's face brightened when he heard them talk. "Yes, ma'am," he told Natalie, "Mr. Slote is here. He's in charge now."

He telephoned from a metal box, and Slote came running down the broad steps. "God! Am I ever glad to see you two!" He threw an arm around Natalie, staring at Byron's dirty head bandage. "What the devil? Are you all right?"

"Fine. What's the news? Are France and Britain fighting?"

"They finally declared war Sunday, although they've not done anything since but drop leaflets." He led them into the ambassador's office, explaining that Washington had ordered the ambassador and most of his staff out of Poland when the bombing began.

Over a wonderful breakfast of ham and eggs, their first hot food in days, they described their journey. Slote was appalled. "You two are incredible. Incredibly lucky, too."

"And incredibly filthy," Natalie said. "What do we do now?"

"Well, you're just stuck here, my love. The Swedes and the Swiss are trying to arrange a safe-conduct for neutrals. Meantime you'll have to dodge bombs like the rest of us. I'll cable Byron's father via Stockholm, and he'll pass the word to Siena."

"I am dying for a bath," Natalie said.

Slote took keys from his pocket. "I'm staying here at the embassy. Take my apartment. It's nearby and on the ground floor, which is the safest. When I was there last the cold water was still running, and we had electricity."

"Do you mind," Natalie said, "if Byron stays with me?" Both men showed surprise and embarrassment. "Oh, for crying out loud, Byron. With all the running into the bushes we did—" She turned to Slote. "He's like a loyal kid brother, sort of."

"It's up to you," Slote said, without enthusiasm. "There's a sofa in the sitting room."

SLIVERS of sunlight through the closed shutters made Slote's flat an oasis of peaceful half-gloom. "Want to wash up first?" Natalie said. "Once I get in that tub there'll be no moving me for hours. I'm going to boil up some hot water. But I don't know. Maybe you should find a hospital first, and get your head examined."

The phrase at once struck them both as funny. They laughed and laughed. "Well, while we still both stink," Natalie gasped, "come here." She threw her arms around him and kissed him. "You damned fool, going to Medzice to visit some dopey Jews."

"My head's all right," Byron said. The touch of the girl's mouth on his was like flowers and birdsong. "I'll clean up first."

As he shaved she kept coming into the bathroom, emptying steaming kettles into the cracked yellow tub. "How pale you are, Briny," she said, inspecting his clean-shaven face, "and how young! I keep forgetting. You're just a boy."

"Oh, don't exaggerate. I've had the maturity to flunk out of graduate school," Byron said.

"Get out of here. I'm diving into that tub."

Half an hour later, an unmistakable wailing scream sounded outside. Byron, dozing on the sofa, snapped awake and took binoculars from his suitcase. Natalie emerged from the bathroom in Slote's white terry-cloth robe. "Do we have to go to the cellar?"

"I'll have a look." He scanned the heavens from the outside door and spotted the planes: black machines, bigger than the one that had wounded him, showing the same crosses and swastikas.

Behind him Natalie said, "Is that bombing? Those thumps?"

"Yes. But the planes I saw were not headed this way."

The thumps became louder. They sat on the sofa, smoking cigarettes and looking at each other. "It's sort of like a summer electric storm coming toward you," Natalie said in a shaky voice.

A distant whistling noise became louder, a sudden crash jarred the room, and glass broke somewhere. There were two more close explosions; then from the street came shouts and screams, and the grumble of falling walls. "Briny, shall we run for the cellar?"

"Better sit tight."

The thumps went on for a while, some so close they could be felt in the floor, in the teeth. Then they died off. Outside, bells clanged, running feet trampled on the cobblestones, men yelled. Byron pulled aside curtains, opened a window, and pointed at two smashed, burning houses down the street.

"Those German bastards," Natalie said. "Oh my God, Briny. Look!" Men were carrying limp figures out of the clouds of smoke. One held a child dangling in each arm. "Can't we help?"

"There must be volunteer squads that neutrals can work in. Nursing, rescue, cleanup. I'll find out."

She turned away. Barefoot, wrapped in the oversize robe, her unpainted face shiny with tears, Natalie looked younger and much less formidable than usual. "I got you into it. That keeps eating at me. Your parents must be sick with worry—"

"My people are navy. As for me, I'm having fun."

"Fun?" She scowled at him. "What do you mean?"

"I wouldn't have missed this for anything, that's all."

"Byron! People have been dying out there. You saw those kids."

"Look, all I meant was—"

"It's just such a stupid, callous thing to say." She hitched the robe about her closer and stalked to the bathroom.

10

AFTER the blaring pageantry and war fevers of Nazi Germany, coming back to Washington was to Pug a bit like coming out of a technicolor movie into a quiet street. Here, where the Capitol dome and the Washington Monument shimmered in ninety-

degree heat, people went apathetically about their business, and the invasion of Poland seemed as remote as Mars.

He sat in the Army and Navy Club breakfasting on kippers and scrambled eggs. His arrival the day before had proved a puzzling letdown. The man in the German section of the State Department had told him to expect a call in the morning; nothing more.

"Well, well, our cookie-pushing friend!" Grinning down at him were three classmates whom Pug had not seen for years. They joined him and began exchanging gossip. Paul Munson had learned to fly way back in 1921 and was now air operations officer of the *Saratoga*. Digger Brown, Pug's old roommate, was the first of the class to make exec of a battleship. Harry Warendorf had had the bad luck to pile a destroyer onto some rocks in a fog. He had fallen into minesweepers and stayed there.

Under the rough banter they were curious and respectful. They asked remarkably naïve questions about the European war. Pug was trying to explain why the Germans were winning in Poland when a page boy called him to the telephone.

"Commander Henry? I'm Carton. Captain Russell Carton. I think we were briefly at the War College together."

"That's right, Captain, 1937." Pug suppressed his astonishment: Russell Carton was President Roosevelt's naval aide.

"When shall I pick you up? Our appointment's at noon."

"How far do we have to go?"

"Just around the corner. The White House. You're seeing the President. . . . Hello. Are you there?"

"Yes, sir. Do I get a briefing on this?"

"Not that I know of. Wear dress whites. Eleven thirty?"

"Aye aye, sir."

He went back to his table. The others tactfully asked no questions. Munson said, "Pug, don't you have a boy in Pensacola? I'm flying down there day after tomorrow. Come along."

"If I can, Paul. I'll call you."

Pug donned his whites and ribbons and sat in the lobby until a sailor came in and called his name. He rode the few blocks to the White House in a gray navy Chevrolet, dazedly trying to keep up chitchat with Captain Carton. Once there, Carton led him

through the broad public rooms, along corridors, up staircases, and into a small room. "Wait here a moment," he said. The moment lasted twenty-seven minutes. Pug paced, sat down, and paced again. He was hoping the President wouldn't remember him.

In 1918, as a very cocky Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt had crossed to Europe on a destroyer. The ship's officers, including Ensign Henry, had snickered at the enormous, handsome young man with the famous family name who made a great show of using nautical terms and bounding up ladders like a sea dog. He was a charmer, they agreed, but a lightweight.

One morning Ensign Henry had done his usual workout on the forecastle and then had hosed himself down from a salt-water riser on the well deck. Unfortunately the ship was pitching steeply. The hose got away and spouted down a hatchway just as Roosevelt was coming topside in a gold-buttoned blazer, white flannel trousers, and straw hat. Pug had endured a fierce chewing out by his captain and the dripping Assistant Secretary.

Now a door opened. "Come in, Pug," Captain Carton said.

The President waved from behind the desk, then held out his hand. "Hello there! Glad to see you!" The warm, commanding, aristocratic voice jarred Pug with its very familiarity. "Drop your bonnet on the desk, Commander, and have a chair." A gray-faced man slouched in an armchair near the President. "By the way, this is the Secretary of Commerce, Harry Hopkins."

Roosevelt's own high coloring was unchanged from twenty years ago; he was the same towering man, and though he had the lordly look of a person in great office, a trace remained in the upthrust jaw of the youthful conceit that had made the ensigns on the *Davey* snicker. He looked archly at Victor Henry. "Well, Pug, have you learned yet how to hang on to a salt-water hose at sea?"

"Oh, gawd, sir." Pug put a hand to his face in mock despair. "I've heard about your memory, but I hoped you'd forgotten *that*."

"Ha-ha-ha!" The President threw his head back. "Not on your life. Now that I'm Commander in Chief of the United States Navy, Pug Henry, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Sir, the quality of mercy is mightiest in the mightiest."

"Oho! *Very* good, Pug. You're forgiven." Roosevelt's face turned

serious. He glanced at Captain Carton, and the aide left. "Well, what's going on in Germany, Pug? Tell me about it from your end."

Victor Henry described the peculiar atmosphere in Berlin, the playing down of the war by the Nazis, the taciturn calm he had observed in the Berliners. The President kept looking at Hopkins, who had what Pug thought of as a banana face: long, meager, and curved, but with eyes which were thoughtful and electrically alive. Then Hopkins asked, in a soft voice, "How well, really, do you know the Germans?"

"Not at all well, Mr. Secretary. They're hard to make out. But in the end there's only one thing you have to know about them."

"Yes? What's that?"

"How to lick them."

Roosevelt gave the hearty guffaw of a man who loved life. "A warmonger, eh? Are you suggesting we ought to get into it?"

"Not unless we have to, Mr. President."

"Oh, we'll have to," Roosevelt said.

This struck Pug as an amazing indiscretion. The press was full of the President's ringing declarations that America would stay out of the war. Roosevelt went blandly on with a compliment about Pug's report on Germany's combat readiness. "How did you foresee that pact with Stalin? Everybody here was stupefied."

"I guess somebody was bound to make that wild guess, Mr. President. It happened to be me."

"Actually, Pug, we also had some warning. There was a leak—never mind where. Trouble was, nobody here was much inclined to believe it." He looked at Hopkins with a touch of mischief. "That's always the problem with intelligence, isn't it?"

Hopkins glanced at his watch. "Mr. President, the Secretary and Senator Pittman are on their way over."

"Already? The embargo business? Well, Pug. Thank you for coming. This has been grand. Now if there's anything else you think I should know, how about dropping me a line? I mean that."

At this grotesque proposal for bypassing the chain of command Pug could only blink and nod. The President caught his expression. "Nothing official, of course," he said quickly. "But I liked that thing you wrote. I could just see that submarine base empty-

ing out at five o'clock. Sometimes one little thing like that can tell you more than a report umpteen pages long." He gave Pug the look of a boss who has issued an order.

"Yes, Mr. President," Victor Henry said.

"Oh, by the way, here's a suggestion that's just come to my desk, Pug, for helping the Allies. Suppose we offer to buy the *Queen Mary* and the *Normandie*, to use them for evacuating Americans from Europe? It would give Britain and France some much needed dollars, and we'd have two fine ships. How about it?"

"Mr. President, I'd say those ships are major war assets and they'd be insane to sell them. They're the fastest vessels for their tonnage afloat; they can outrun any submarine, and their carrying capacity is fantastic. They're magnificent troop transports."

Roosevelt asked Hopkins, "Was that the navy's response?"

"I'd have to check, Mr. President. I think they were mainly concerned with where the money'd come from."

Franklin Roosevelt, smiling at Victor Henry, held out a long arm for a handshake. "Keep in touch, now."

"Aye aye, sir."

Captain Carton met Pug in the anteroom. "Well, that must have gone all right. You went way past the scheduled time."

"It went fast." Pug hoped he had said something illuminating enough to justify the public money spent on his trip. It had seemed just pleasant small talk. "What now?" he asked.

"What did the President say?"

"It was a pretty definite good-by, I thought."

Carton smiled. "Well, you're not scheduled here again, but maybe you should check in with CNO." He reached into a breast pocket. "This just came from the State Department."

It was an official dispatch envelope. Pug opened it and read the message on flimsy pink paper: FORWARDED X BYRON HENRY NATALIE JASTROW SAFE WELL WARSAW X AWAITING EVACUATION ALL NEUTRALS NOW UNDER NEGOTIATION GERMAN GOVERNMENT X SLOTE.

VICTOR Henry disappointed Hugh Cleveland; just a squat, broad-shouldered, ordinary-looking man of about fifty, standing at the receptionist's desk. Cleveland sized him up as apple-pie

American, fairly intelligent but far from formidable. Yet he knew Madeline feared and admired her father, and day by day he thought more highly of the young girl's judgment. He took a respectful tone. "Commander Henry? It's a pleasure."

"Hello. Hope I'm not busting in on anything. I thought I'd just drop by and have a look-see."

"Glad you did. Madeline's timing a script. She won't be long." They walked along the corridor to his office. "She was amazed. Thought you were in Germany." He waved Pug to a chair. "Sir, you can be proud of Madeline. She's an unusual girl."

"Unusual in what way?"

"Well, she understands things and does them reliably the first time you tell her. I haven't heard her whine yet. And she isn't afraid of people. I understand you want her to go back to school, and that she'll have to quit next week. I'm very sorry about that."

"The girl's only twenty."

"She's better than women of twenty-five and thirty who've worked for me." Cleveland smiled. He had an infectious grin and an automatic warmth, a quality the navy deprecatingly called "grease." Men who had it climbed fast—till they slipped.

"I wish she'd show some of these qualities at school. I don't like the idea of a twenty-year-old girl loose in New York."

Cleveland changed the subject. "Sir, how about coming on our show? We'd be honored to have you. As America's naval attaché in Nazi Germany you could strike a blow for preparedness, or a two-ocean navy. We've just had Admiral Preble on the show."

"Yes, I know. That's how I found out what Madeline is doing."

"Would you consider it, sir?"

"Not on your life." The sudden frost in Pug's tone rose from a suspicion that the praise of Madeline had been a way of greasing him. He did not like Cleveland. He could see, though, that she would relish working for such a Broadwayish fellow.

In a swishing charcoal pleated skirt and gray blouse, Madeline came rushing into Cleveland's office. "Gosh, Dad, what a surprise," she said, kissing him. "Is everything all right?"

"Everything's dandy." She looked a lot more mature, and brilliantly excited. He said, "If you're busy, I can see you later."

Cleveland put in, "No, no, Commander. Madeline wants to show you around the studios."

In other circumstances Pug would have enjoyed the tour. But with Poland under attack, radio amusement seemed unbearably tawdry. In their walk she asked only perfunctory questions about the family and none about Germany.

"Madeline, what attracts you in all this?"

"Dad, in ten days I've met the most marvelous people. Even Gary Cooper. And Mr. Cleveland is really brilliant."

"Is he married?"

"He has a wife and three children."

"When does your school start?"

"Dad, do I have to go back? I'll be so miserable—"

He cut her off. "Madeline, I'm going out to the Brooklyn Navy Yard to have dinner aboard the *Colorado*. Digger Brown's the executive officer. Like to come along? What's the matter? Do you have other plans?"

Madeline sighed. "Well, I was going to dinner and the theater with some kids I've met at CBS. A couple of writers, an actress, some other new girls like me. Can't we have breakfast tomorrow instead? I'll come to your hotel."

"That'll be fine. I think it's damn peculiar that you've fallen into this. It's the farthest thing from your mother's interests or mine."

Madeline looked aslant at him. "Oh? But Mother did spend a whole summer as a dancer in a traveling musical show."

"Sure. She was seventeen. It was an escapade."

"Yes? Well, once in the attic of the Nag's Head house, she came upon the parasol she had used in her solo. Right there she kicked off her shoes, opened the parasol, and did the whole dance for me. And she sang a song. 'Ching-ching-challa-wa China Girl.' I must have been about twelve."

"Oh, yes," said Pug. "She did it for me too. Before we were married, in fact. Well, I'm off to the *Colorado*. Tomorrow after breakfast I fly down to Pensacola. Next day I return to Berlin."

She put her arms around him. "Please, Dad. Let me work."

"I'll write or cable you about that from Berlin. I'll have to discuss it with Ching-ching-challa-wa China Girl."

"HELLO, DAD!" When Paul Munson's plane landed, Warren was waiting at the Pensacola airfield in a helmet and flying jacket. His firm handgrip and radiant face told Pug of his pride in what he was doing.

Driving his father to the bachelor officers' quarters, Warren never stopped talking. The flight school was in a buzz, he said, since Hitler invaded Poland. The number of students had been tripled, the course cut to six months, and the pilots put on patrol, scout, or fighter tracks at once. He was dying to make Squadron Five, which was fighter training. The lists would be posted in the morning. Finally he remembered to ask about the family.

"Ye gods, Briny's in *Warsaw*?"

"That's right." Pug studied his young flier and thought of Byron under the German bombs. It was going to be a tough few years, he thought, for men with grown sons.

Warren told his father that Congressman Isaac Lacouture had invited them to dinner at the beach club. Lacouture was president of the club, and before running for Congress had been chairman of the Gulf Lumber and Paper Company, the biggest firm in Pensacola. "He's anxious to meet you," Warren said. "He's very interested in the war and in Germany."

"Why has he taken such a shine to you?"

"Well, his daughter and I have sort of hit it off." With an easy grin, Warren parted from his father in the BOQ lobby.

At his first sight of Janice Lacouture, Pug decided against mentioning Pamela Tudsbury to Warren. What chance had the English girl in her mousy suits against this assured, radiant, tall American girl? She greeted Pug with just enough deference to acknowledge that he was Warren's father, and just enough sparkle to hint that he was an attractive man himself.

Waves broke over the club terrace and splattered heavy spray on the glass wall of the dining room, making the candlelit dinner seem the cozier. "How long are you going to be here, Commander Henry?" the congressman asked, as the waiter passed a large baked fish on a silver platter. "You might like to come out for a day's fishing. Your boy caught this kingfish with me."

Pug said he had to leave in the morning.

"Well, at that I suppose I'll be hurrying up to Washington myself for this special session. What do *you* think of Roosevelt's revising the Neutrality Act? How bad is the situation, actually?"

"I think Poland's going to fall fast, if you call that bad."

"Oh, hell, the President is counting on that! The gloomier things look in the next few weeks, the easier it'll be for him to jam anything he wants through Congress."

Warren said, "I don't see how his revision would weaken our neutrality, sir. That cash-and-carry policy simply means anybody can buy stuff who has the money and the ships. Hitler included."

Lacouture smiled at him. "That's the Administration line, my boy. Except we all know that the Allies have the ships and the money, and the Germans have neither."

"But nobody stopped Hitler from building a merchant marine," Warren came back. "He piled up aggressive weapons instead."

"Warren's absolutely right," Janice said.

"What you kids don't understand," Lacouture said, "is that Roosevelt thinks he's got a mission to save the world from Hitler. Now I say Hitler is just another European politician, a little dirtier than the rest. The way for us to save the world is to stay out of Hitler's war, and to be ready to rebuild a decent world when it's over. I'm going to fight like an alligator for that, though I'll be marked mud among a lot of my Democratic colleagues."

When dinner ended, Janice and Warren left the club together. Victor Henry found himself alone with Lacouture over coffee and brandy. "Your Warren's quite a boy," the congressman said.

"Well, thanks. Your girl is beyond words."

Lacouture puffed at a cigar. "I liked the way Warren talked up at dinner. Of course he's naïve about foreign affairs. You learn a lot about the outside world in the lumber business. No doubt you're glad to see him carrying on the navy tradition. Wouldn't want to see him shift over into business, or anything like that?"

"Warren goes his own way, Congressman."

"I'm not so sure. He thinks the world of his dad."

The talk was getting awkward for Victor Henry. He had married a girl much better off than himself, and he had doubts about such a course. Nor did he especially like Janice. Once the in-

candescence died down she would be as tough as her father, who was already weighing the notion of swallowing Warren. He said, "Well, until the war ends he's in, and that's that."

Warren was exultant when he arrived at his father's room in the BOQ next morning. The assignments had been posted and he'd made Squadron Five, while some of the hottest student pilots had not. "There's nothing like flying, Dad," he said, when he had broken the news. "Absolutely nothing!"

His father listened, smiling, remembering the day at Annapolis when he had drawn his first battleship duty. He said at last that it was time for him to leave.

Warren glanced at his watch. "Gosh, already?" He threw an arm around his father's shoulder. "I feel mixed up. I'm damn sorry to see you go, and I've never been happier in my life."

11

From the German viewpoint, the invasion was proceeding merrily. All over Poland, miles and miles of helmeted Germans walked along, or rode in trucks, cars, or on horses. Tanks and motorized guns clanked with them, while out ahead crawled the new tank companies, the famous panzers, firing their big shells. These lethal machines, and the Stukas diving and shooting from the sky, killed many Poles and scared masses more into quitting. This was the blitzkrieg, or lightning war, of which Allied and American newspapers were already writing terrified accounts.

On the military maps, the arrows and pins were closing in on Warsaw, on Byron and Natalie and Slote. But the blitzkrieg was halted at Warsaw. The Germans had to inflict an old-fashioned, horse-drawn bombardment, while the panzer machines limped into repair shops, low on gasoline and breaking down. Then the panzers arrived on September 9. On the tenth the supreme German commander was writing in his battle diary that the war was over. But on the seventeenth Warsaw still stood. Luftwaffe bombers were making unopposed runs over the city, which was also ringed by howitzers. And still Radio Warsaw played the "*Polonaise*."

Leslie Slote was an exceptionally able man, but his present job

was wrong for him, because he was a coward. Bad luck had put him in a spot where all his political knowledge, all his gifts of analysis, humor, and foreign tongues were of little avail compared with simple courage. That, as he was well aware, he lacked.

His struggle to hide the lack showed only in absentmindedness, irritability, and a tendency to laugh for no reason. When the departing ambassador had asked him to stay on to head the skeleton staff, a shrill laugh had welled up out of him. With a quizzical look, the ambassador had let it pass. But Slote had been in a black panic since the first bomb had fallen, and the hell went on and on. In a way, being in charge was a help. It looked proper for him to move out of his apartment to stay at the embassy, which was safer, and to set an example during air raids by immediately darting down to the cellar. Nobody guessed his trouble.

Dawn of September 17 found him at the ambassador's big desk, a pipe clenched in his teeth, drafting a dispatch to the State Department on the condition of the embassy and the Americans trapped in Warsaw. "Come in," he called to a knock at the door.

"I brought the water," Byron said hoarsely as he walked in. With seventy people under the embassy roof, the lack of water might have been disastrous. But the day the water main had broken, Byron had gone out in the embassy's pickup truck and had retrieved from a bombed-out house a rusty boiler which had served as a water tank. Day after day, through bombardment and air attack, he went out and fetched water. "It's broad daylight," he said now. "Shall I open the curtains?"

"Okay." Slote laughed. Together they pulled back the heavy curtains. "Such smoke! Are there that many fires?" Slote would have preferred to shut out such things a while longer.

"God, yes. Didn't you see the sky last night? All red and smoky, like Dante's Inferno, and these big orange star shells popping all over. Quite a sight! It's the water problem that's going to lick them. Over on Wawelska they're trying to put out two huge fires with shovels and sand."

"They should have accepted the German offer yesterday," Slote said. "They'd have had half a city left. How on earth did you fetch today's water? Did you find some gasoline for the truck?"

Byron shook his head and collapsed on the leather couch. His sweater and slacks were covered with brick dust and soot, and his eyes glowed dully in purple rings. "Gasoline's finished. We can forget about the truck. I scouted around most of the night till I found a cart and a horse. The U. S. government owes me the one hundred and seventy-five dollars I paid the owner for the cart."

"You'll get paid, of course. Do you want breakfast?"

"I'm not sure I have the energy to chew," Byron said, closing his eyes. "There's no water at the opera house corner anymore. I had to go clear over to the pumping station."

"Thank you, Byron. You're being a great help."

"Where's Natalie?" Byron mumbled. "At the hospital?"

"I daresay."

When the telephone rang, Byron was asleep. The mayor's office was calling; Mayor Starzynski was on his way to the embassy to discuss a sudden development of the highest urgency. Excited, Slote phoned the marine sentry at the gate to admit him. This must be news: safe-conduct for foreigners out of Warsaw, or perhaps imminent surrender! He thought of waking Byron and asking him to leave, but decided to wait. The kid needed sleep.

Slote was grateful to Byron not only for the water but for keeping Natalie out of his way; for she was the one person in Warsaw capable of penetrating to his secret. Her presence in the city was a haunting burden. He had a wild craving for this exotic and obstinate Jewess, but marrying her would be totally wrong for his career. Since breaking off their relations in Paris, she had told him half a dozen times to forget her. Why, then, had she thrust herself on him just when he was saddled with the heaviest responsibility of his life and yet felt befogged and castrated by fear?

Mayor Starzynski's arrival cut off his brooding. This thickset, mustached man, whose broadcasts were doing more than anything else to keep Warsaw fighting, could hardly be sleeping two hours a night. Yet he looked fresh and combative.

"Who is that?" the mayor said, pointing at the couch.

"Just an exhausted boy. He doesn't understand Polish."

Starzynski sat down. "Well. Are your people all right? Is there anything we can do for you?"

"We're fine. We're awed by the stand Warsaw is making."

"Yes? The Germans have a bone in their throat, eh? We drove them back in the north last night." The mayor was red with pride. "You'll see. Soon we'll have a battle line again, not a siege."

"That's wonderful news, your Honor."

"Yes, but the other news is not so good." The mayor paused. "The Soviet Union invaded our country at dawn. Russians are pouring over the border by the millions! To protect their nationals in Poland from the Germans, they say. It's a crude, disgusting lie, of course. We have been using all our forces to hold off the Germans, and now there is nothing to oppose the Russians."

Slote burst out laughing.

The mayor stared at him, eyes bulging. "What is the matter, sir? Don't you believe me? I have a message for your President!" He slapped a paper on the desk. "The highest speed is crucial."

The words on the paper swam before Slote's eyes. All he could see were Soviet tanks and soldiers approaching Warsaw to help the Germans pulverize it. "I understand the situation is extraordinary," he managed to say, "but a communication from the head of a municipality to a head of government is awkward. An approach from your national government might prove more fruitful."

"But sir, our national government has crossed the border into Rumania. Only Warsaw fights on. We want to know what we can hope for."

Slote got hold of himself and scanned the dispatch: the pathetic rhetoric of appeal. "I'm not sure how fast I can get this out, sir. I've been encountering long delays via Stockholm."

"I guarantee you immediate transmission. Send it in plain language. For if the great American President speaks a word of hope, the Allies will march to smash the Germans."

"We can encode it very rapidly, your Honor. I think that's more prudent. We'll be ready to transmit in half an hour."

Starzynski stood up. "We will arrange voice communication for you with Stockholm or Berne." He glanced around the room. "A peaceful oasis. The Luftwaffe respects the American flag."

"Mr. Mayor, is there any word on evacuating neutrals?"

"I did raise the question yesterday when a German emissary

came under a flag of truce to demand our surrender," the mayor said gravely. "He indicated that something would be worked out soon." He gave Slote a twisted smile. "We don't expect you to stay on and share our fate."

"You understand that we have nineteen women here," Slote said, feeling a need to apologize. He grasped the mayor's hand.

When Starzynski left, Slote summoned a coding clerk. Then he shook Byron. "Wake up! All hell is breaking loose." Byron opened dull eyes. "The Russians invaded Poland this morning. God knows when they'll be here. Go and get Natalie."

Byron sat up. "Holy cow. This thing's getting interesting."

"*Interesting?* Warsaw will be blown to atoms! Tell Natalie she's to come here and stay here. Working in a belligerent's hospital is damned questionable, anyway. You must move in here, too."

"But what's the rush? The Russians can't get here for a week."

Slote laughed. It was true it would take an army several days to advance three hundred kilometers. "Of course, but the Germans may decide on half an hour's notice to let the neutrals out. If it happens, there can be no delay."

"Well, I'll try to get her, but you know Natalie."

By now Byron knew the route to the hospital well; sooty heaps of rubble, craters, and broken sewer pipes pockmarked the way. Women were cooking over fires of splintered wood in the bright sunshine. Work gangs were shoveling and bulldozing debris. Almost everybody appeared cheerful and matter-of-fact, though some people with blank faces wandered amid the rubble, fumbling to find things. He passed no traces of the dead.

But as Byron made his way through the entrance hall of the hospital, the cheerful air gave way to a pitiful scene. Wounded lay crowded helter-skelter on the floor, blood-smeared, with faces torn open and occasionally a red stump of limb. Byron hurried down a stone staircase into a long, low basement area.

"Is he crazy?" Natalie exclaimed, when Byron had relayed Slote's message. "How can I leave? I just came on duty. Look!" She swept her arm around. "It's the only maternity ward left in Warsaw. This morning we counted eighty-two women—"

A stoop-shouldered doctor with a big nose and sad, filmed eyes was walking past. He asked Natalie in German what the problem was, and she told him. "By all means, go," he said in an exhausted voice. "If the embassy sends for you, you must obey."

"But I can get there in five minutes if we're leaving."

"No, no; that's a risk you can't take. You're not a Pole. And you're Jewish, you're Jewish." The doctor raised a hand and pulled off the white cloth that bound her hair. "You must go home."

Tears began to rain down Natalie's face. "The woman with the twins is hemorrhaging. And the baby with the bad foot—"

"I'll see them now. Go to the embassy right away. Thank you. You've helped us. Have a safe journey." The doctor shuffled away.

She turned on Byron. "Leslie Slote is a selfish bastard," Natalie cried. "He just doesn't want to have me on his mind. Here." She pulled out a thick wallet. "I'll go to the damned embassy. But will you find Berel and give him this? It's all my American money. Will you do that for me?"

"Sure."

"Tell me, Briny," Natalie said, "are you still having fun?"

He looked around at the evil-smelling ward, where women were helplessly bringing new life into a dying city. "More fun than a barrel of monkeys. Be careful going to the embassy, will you?"

"All right. You'll probably find Berel in that gray building where the Jewish council works."

Hurrying down Marshal Pilsudski Boulevard toward the Jewish section, Byron heard the thumping of heavy guns and nearby explosions. He muttered routine curses at the Germans. To call this amazing outrage "war" was not to make it any more understandable. And yet in this horrible state of affairs he had been doing the most satisfying job of his life. He was willing to be killed supplying water to the embassy. But the novel thing he was finding out was that the odds were all with him. Most people in Warsaw were still going about their business, and he passed many houses which looked exactly as they had before the attack.

The Jewish quarter, however, was one broad, smoky ruin. Clearly the Germans were raining extra shells and bombs here, even though they could have broken Warsaw much faster by con-

centrating on the city's vitals—power, water, transport, bridges. But despite the devastation, this quarter, too, still abounded in eager life. Outside a ruined schoolhouse, boys in skullcaps sat with their bearded teacher, chanting over enormous books. Inside a house, someone was practicing on a violin.

Berel Jastrow was not in the council building, but Byron found him inspecting the community kitchen in a huge stone Romanesque synagogue nearby. He stood in a room where people were lined up for a strong-smelling stew being ladled out by women from tubs on wood-burning stoves.

"The Russians!" Berel stroked his beard, then led Byron into the street, well away from the food queue. "It may be good news. Suppose the two robbers cut each other's throats?"

He was taken aback when Byron offered him Natalie's wallet. "But I have money. I have dollars. She may need this herself. She isn't out of Warsaw yet."

It had not occurred to Byron that Jastrow might be offended, but now the reaction seemed natural. He said the Americans expected to leave Warsaw soon under a flag of truce.

"So. We won't see you or Natalie again? Well, if the Germans let all you Americans out together, she should be safe. Tell her I thank her. I'll put the money in the food fund. *Vorsicht!*"

A shell exploded not far away, making Byron's ears ache. Berel spoke hurriedly. "So, now you will be seeing my cousin Aaron. Please tell him to get out of Italy. *Lekh lekha*. Can you remember that? And will you do me another favor?" Berel gave Byron a worn white card. "This is an importer in New Jersey. He sent a bank draft in August for a large shipment of mushrooms. It came too late. I destroyed the draft, so there's no problem, but—What are you smiling at?"

"You have so much to worry about, and yet you think of this."

Jastrow shrugged. "This is my business. We're in for a very bad time, but a war always ends. So—" He held out his hand. "God bless you, and—"

Byron heard the unmistakable whir and whistle of a shell very close. It went splintering through the synagogue roof. The stunning explosion came a second or two later, giving him and Jastrow

time to clap their hands to their ears and fall to the ground. Then, even as they stood again, they saw the whole façade of the synagogue come sliding down, disintegrating as it went. White dust boiled up, and through it Byron could see the marble pillars and carved wooden doors of the holy ark untouched on the far wall, looking naked in the pale smoky sunshine.

Berel slapped him sharply on the shoulder. "Go now. And thank you, thank you. A safe journey to you both."

Four days later, early in the morning, Natalie came scampering out into the embassy backyard, where Byron was burning blank passport booklets and visa application files. Visa requests, because they identified Jews, were high on the burn list, and the passport booklets could be used by the Germans to smuggle spies and saboteurs into the United States.

"Hurry. Come with me." She led him to the front gate, where Slote sat in a chauffeured limousine next to a gray-headed man.

"Hi, Byron!" Slote sounded surprisingly cheerful. "This is the Swedish ambassador. Byron's father is our naval attaché in Berlin, Ambassador. We should take him along, don't you think?"

The ambassador gave Byron a wise look. "Very much so. And he should perhaps take notes."

As Byron got into the back seat, Natalie blurted to the ambassador, "Can I come along? Byron and I are traveling together."

With an annoyed grimace, Slote shook his head. The ambassador looked at her with masculine amusement. "Wouldn't you be frightened of the guns, my dear? We're going to inspect the safe-conduct exit route. We may come rather close to the front."

"I've heard guns before."

The ambassador smiled and made room for her beside him.

The car started off on a rough, zigzag ride toward the river. Apart from glowering, nervous soldiers at main intersections, few people were in sight. They drove out on the bridge, over the Vistula, serenely flowing between Warsaw and its eastern suburb.

"How far do we go?" Slote said, as the gun booms grew louder.

"We have to look for a schoolhouse with a stone goose in front, a hundred yards or so past a wayside shrine."

On the other side of the river they found a scene of ruin. Broken homes and burned trees lined the road, which was so torn up by shellfire that the car frequently had to detour on dirt tracks. As it bumped along one of these paths, they saw Polish gun crews moving about. A heavy gun in some woods suddenly went off. "My God!" Slote said. Two or three loud explosions a minute started off around them. Sometimes they saw flames from gun mouths, though the guns themselves were camouflaged. To Byron it was novel and exciting to be sight-seeing this war in what seemed perfect safety. But then a German shell burst, throwing up a geyser of dirt which rattled on the limousine roof.

"The front!" Slote said. "We're at it right now!"

"Yes, the schoolhouse must be right past that next curve," the ambassador said.

Slote said, "Please stop the car."

The ambassador glanced at him and spoke to the driver.

"I didn't in the least understand from you," Slote said, gesturing with his pipe, "that we were going into the actual zone of fire. Are you sure we aren't behind the German lines?"

The ambassador pushed out his lips. "I don't believe we've come more than three miles from the bridge."

Slote burst out laughing. "These young people are my responsibility. We'll have to take them back."

The ambassador looked at his watch. "I'm afraid we can't stop. The cease-fire may come within the hour. As soon as we get back, we'll have to assemble our parties. Colonel Rakowski asked that we study the route beforehand to prevent our refugees getting lost during the truce. I really do think we'd better go on." Two heavy guns went off in the woods—RRUMPH! RRUMPH!

"*Just a moment!*" Slote had gone pale. "Ambassador, I must insist that you at least take us back to the bridge."

A peculiar feeling knotted Byron's stomach. The ambassador's faultless manners did not obscure what was happening, and Slote represented the United States. He said, "Leslie, I think you're dead right about Natalie. Why not take her into one of those log houses over there and wait? I can get the information."

The ambassador said, "Excellent idea! We won't be long."

Slote got out of the car. "Come on, Natalie. We'll wait in the one with the green blinds. I saw a woman at the windows."

Natalie stayed in her seat, her mouth pulled down. The ambassador spoke stiffly. "My dear, please do as you are told."

Jumping out, she slammed the door and ran toward the house. Slote hurried after her, shouting, and the limousine shot forward.

About half a mile farther they came upon the schoolhouse. As they entered the building, Colonel Rakowski, an enormous man with pointed blond mustaches, hailed the Swedish ambassador with a shout and a hug. He and his officers seemed in unrealistically good spirits, Byron thought, considering the bad news that shrieked from the military map on the wall: a thick red circle, completely ringing Warsaw. The colonel led the visitors outside, to the top of a concrete gun emplacement. A forested plain lay before them, with a scattering of houses and three widely separated church spires. Puffs of smoke came from German artillery.

The colonel talked and gestured, and the ambassador translated for Byron. On the terms of the two-hour cease-fire, the neutrals would cross unescorted from the Polish to the German lines, heading for the farthest church, where Wehrmacht trucks would meet them. "He says," the ambassador concluded, "that the best view of the route is from that observation tower."

Byron looked at the spindly wooden tower. A narrow ladder led to a metal-shielded platform, where he could see the helmet of a soldier. "Well, I'll go up. Maybe I can make a sketch."

"The colonel says the tower is drawing quite a bit of fire."

Byron managed a grin. Borrowing a notebook and pen, he went up the ladder, shaking the frail tower as he climbed. The soldier glanced away from his binoculars to gawk as the young American in an open shirt started sketching the route, crudely picturing the three churches. When Byron showed him the sketch, the soldier slapped his shoulder. "Hokay," he said, proud of his mastery of Americanese.

NATALIE leaned in the doorway of the cottage as the limousine drew up. She hurried out, followed by Slote. As they drove back toward Warsaw, the ambassador recounted their visit to the front

while Byron worked on his sketch and his notes. When he was finished he handed them to the ambassador.

"Thank you. Very well done," the ambassador said.

Natalie pulled Byron's hand to her lap. Sitting on her other side, Slote repeatedly glanced at the two clasped hands. A muscle in his jaw kept moving under the white skin.

In the embassy, all was scurry and noise. The cease-fire was definite now for one o'clock. Polish army trucks would take the Americans to the departure point, and each person could bring one suitcase. The Americans still living outside the embassy were being summoned by telephone.

A small dark man named Mark Hartley, who occupied the cot next to Byron's in the cellar, was sitting hunched beside a strapped-up suitcase. He was a New Yorker in the importing business and his name had once been Marvin Horowitz. He had always liked to joke with them about the change.

"Ready to go, Mark?" Byron asked.

Hartley shook his head. "I've never been so scared in my life. We're going to the Germans, Byron. The Germans."

"Put that in your bag," Byron said, tossing a worn black book to him as he packed his own bag. "And cheer up. You're an American. Named Hartley."

"What's this? The New Testament? What for?"

"Make a good Christian of you. Now stop worrying."

The army trucks, old and caked with mud, came rattling up to the embassy at half past eleven. Inside the fence more than a hundred Americans set up a cheer and sang "California, Here I Come." The gate was opened and the Americans piled into the trucks, which then clanked off. A black Chevrolet with American flags on its fenders brought up the rear; in it were Slote and his three highest-ranking assistants. Natalie had refused to join them. She stood in one of the seatless trucks, clasping Byron's waist.

He said, "Mark is scared stiff of the Germans. How about you?"

Natalie's eyes flashed. "What can they do? I have an American passport. They don't know I'm a Jew."

At the bridge across the Vistula, they converged with truck convoys from other embassies, and the bridge was often jammed to a

standstill. Byron kept glancing at his watch as German shells boiled up like geysers in the river, showering the trucks. The Germans clearly thought it all in the game if they killed nine-tenths of the neutrals fifteen minutes before the cease-fire.

The convoys finally reached the schoolhouse, where Colonel Rakowski and the Swedish ambassador stood giving instructions and copies of Byron's sketch to the descending passengers. At one o'clock the guns fell silent, and the loudest noise was the chattering of the refugees. Then in one language after another a loud-speaker bawled final orders: "Please keep together. Do not make wrong turns. The German command has stated it will accept no responsibility for anybody who is not at the Kantorovicz church by three o'clock. It is an easy hour's walk even for an old person. The enemy will undoubtedly recommence hostilities at three. Please, therefore, hurry. Good luck to you all."

The refugees headed into no-man's-land—a strange slow walk through a fragrant autumnal forest between two silent enemy armies. It took a full hour, and later Byron remembered becoming so thirsty, from tension, that his legs felt weak. Two other memories stayed with him: the diplomats' cars going by, with Slote in the front seat of one, laughing and waving at him and Natalie; and then, when they first saw the Kantorovicz church, Mark Hartley smiling at him, though his face was terror-stricken.

All at once, there were the German gun crews in the woods, standing quietly by their big new howitzers. The Wehrmacht helmets gave the soldiers a beetling, warrior look, but most of them were so young, it was hard to believe they were the villains who had been pouring fire on Warsaw.

From the first, the Germans handled the refugees better than the Poles had. A mule-drawn water cart stood near the church, and soldiers with tin cups herded the thirsty people into a queue. From there they were guided toward clean gray trucks with wooden seats. Near a table by the roadside, Wehrmacht officers talked amiably, though with marked condescension, to the arriving diplomats. As each national group came to the trucks, its ambassador or chargé gave a typed roster to a German soldier who called off names, and one by one the people entered the vehicles.

The loading was not quite over when the guns near the church fired a salvo that made the ground shake. Byron's watch read a minute past three o'clock. "Poor Warsaw," Natalie said. "And just look at Slote. Taking a cigarette from a German!"

"Are you afraid?" Byron said.

"Not now that it's actually happening. I don't know why."

Mark Hartley was sharing their bench at the back of the truck. "Hey, Byron," he said, "that officer with Slote is coming here."

The blond young officer came straight up to Byron. Speaking precisely, with a pleasant accent, he said, "Your chargé tells me that your father is American naval attaché in Berlin."

"Yes, sir, he is."

The officer gave Byron his hand. "Ernst Bayer," he said, clicking his heels. "My father is in the Foreign Ministry. I believe I had the pleasure of meeting your parents in August at the Belgian embassy. Can I offer you a ride in a staff car?"

"Where are we going?"

"Klovno. It's the nearest working railroad junction. There you will transfer to a special train for Königsberg. It's a long trip. You might enjoy it more in an automobile."

"Thanks, but I've been traveling with these people. I think I'll stay with them." The officer bowed and walked back to Slote.

The ride was bumpy and the refugees were tired, and perhaps frightened at being in German hands; hardly a word was spoken in the first hour. The trucks stopped at a convent for the women to "refresh themselves," and Natalie brought back gossip: All the neutrals would be offered a choice of flying to Stockholm or taking German trains to Berlin, thence out via Belgium, Holland, or Switzerland. "You'll go to Berlin, won't you, Briny?"

"I guess so. My dad's probably expecting me."

"You know, I'd sort of like to see Berlin myself," Natalie said.

"Are you crazy?" said Hartley. "You go to Stockholm, baby, and you just pray they *let* you go."

Byron said, "Remember Berel's message to A.J.: *Lekh lekha.*"

"Get out, eh?" She smiled. "Well, maybe."

The ride stretched out to four and five hours of grinding through forests and farmlands, where the inhabitants looked as they would

in a peacetime countryside. In each town a red swastika flag flew over the main square, and German soldiers patrolled, but life went on. The sun sank and the trucks rolled on into the night. Natalie put her head on Byron's shoulder and they dozed.

Commands shouted in German woke them. Lights blazed in a square before a railroad station. Two helmeted Germans opened the door of their truck. "*Bitte raus! Alle in den Wartesaal!*"

The refugees, including the diplomats, gathered in the station waiting room and were then shepherded into a large hall containing plank tables laden with food. The famished Byron thought he had never seen a more dazzling banquet. There were smoking sausages and sauerkraut, whole pink hams, mounds of potatoes, piles of fried chicken, stacked loaves of fresh bread, immense cheeses. But it seemed a cruel Nazi trick, because the neutrals were herded along the walls to stare at the distant food, while in between stood German soldiers with lowered tommy guns.

Then a voice spoke in German over a loudspeaker: "The German people welcome the citizens of the neutral countries in peace and friendship. Relations with Poland have now been normalized. The treacherous Smigly-Rydz regime has ceased to exist. The new law-abiding Poland which will rise from its ashes will no longer provoke disastrous foreign adventures. The Führer can now seriously pursue ways to make peace with Britain and France, and afterward Europe will enter on a new order of mutual prosperity. Now we ask you to sit down and eat. Hearty appetit!"

A dozen smiling blond girls in white uniforms entered, carrying jugs of coffee and beer. The soldiers smiled and made inviting motions with their guns. There was an awkward, shocked moment. First one and then another refugee hesitantly stepped across the space. Others followed, and a noisy rush began.

Like the rest, Byron, Natalie, and Hartley gorged themselves on the most satisfying meal of their lives. Over the loudspeaker came music—waltzes, marches, drinking songs. Many of the neutrals began singing, and even the watching soldiers joined in:

*"Du, du, liegst mir im Herzen,
Du, du, liegst mir im Sinn—"*

Byron swung his stein and sang, as did Mark Hartley, though his eyes never ceased rolling at the German soldiers.

Returning to the waiting room laughing and chattering, they saw placards around the walls, bearing the names of their countries. They went and stood under the United States sign. Then men in black uniforms entered and the cheery conversation faded.

Slote said soberly to the Americans, "Listen, please. Those are the SS. I'll do any talking to them that has to be done."

The men in black fanned out, one to each group of neutrals. The one who headed for the Americans did not appear sinister, except for his operatic black costume. Slote introduced himself.

The SS man bowed, heels together. "You have a gentleman named Byron Henry in your party?"

"This is Byron Henry," Slote said, as Byron stepped forward.

"Your father represents the American navy in Berlin?" Byron nodded. "This message is for you."

Byron put the envelope in his pocket. "I'll look at it later."

The SS man turned to Slote. "I am to collect your passports." His tone was brisk and cool. "Let me have them, please."

Slote was very pale. "I'm reluctant to surrender them, for obvious reasons."

"I assure you it is quite routine. They will be processed on the train and returned before you arrive in Königsberg."

"Very well." At a motion from Slote, an assistant gave him a thick red portfolio, which he handed to the man in black.

"Thank you. Now your roster, please."

The assistant held out three clipped sheets. The SS man glanced through them. "How many Jews in your party?"

Slote took a moment to reply. "I'm sorry, but we make no record of religious affiliation."

"But you do have Jews."

"Whether we do or not, I must decline to answer. My country's policy on religious groups is absolute equality of treatment."

"Nobody is suggesting inequality of treatment. The policy of my government is simply to maintain separate records where Jews are concerned. Now, who are these Jews, please?"

Slote glanced around. In front of several parties a few Jews

already stood separated, heads bowed. "Look here, for your purposes you can assume we're all Jews." His voice shook.

"Nobody's putting me down for a Jew," said a man's voice behind Byron. "I'm not buying that, Leslie."

The speaker was a retired army officer named Tom Stanley, who was given to saying that the Jews brought all their trouble on themselves. Byron held his breath as the SS man asked for Stanley's name and then said in a cordial, man-to-man way, "Who are the Jews here, please, Mr. Stanley?"

Stanley cleared his throat. All the Americans were staring at him. "Well, so far as I know there aren't any. Not in this party."

The SS officer shrugged, ran his eyes over the group, and stopped at Mark Hartley. "You. Step this way."

"Stay where you are," Slote said to Hartley; then, to the officer, "I protest this procedure, and I warn you that it will result in a written protest from my government if it continues."

The officer gestured around the room. "The officials of all the other governments are cooperating. This is a simple matter of local regulations. What is your name, you there?"

"Mark Hartley." The voice was steadier than Slote's.

"Really! Hartley!" The SS man smiled a peculiar, chilling smile. "And your parents' name?"

"That name."

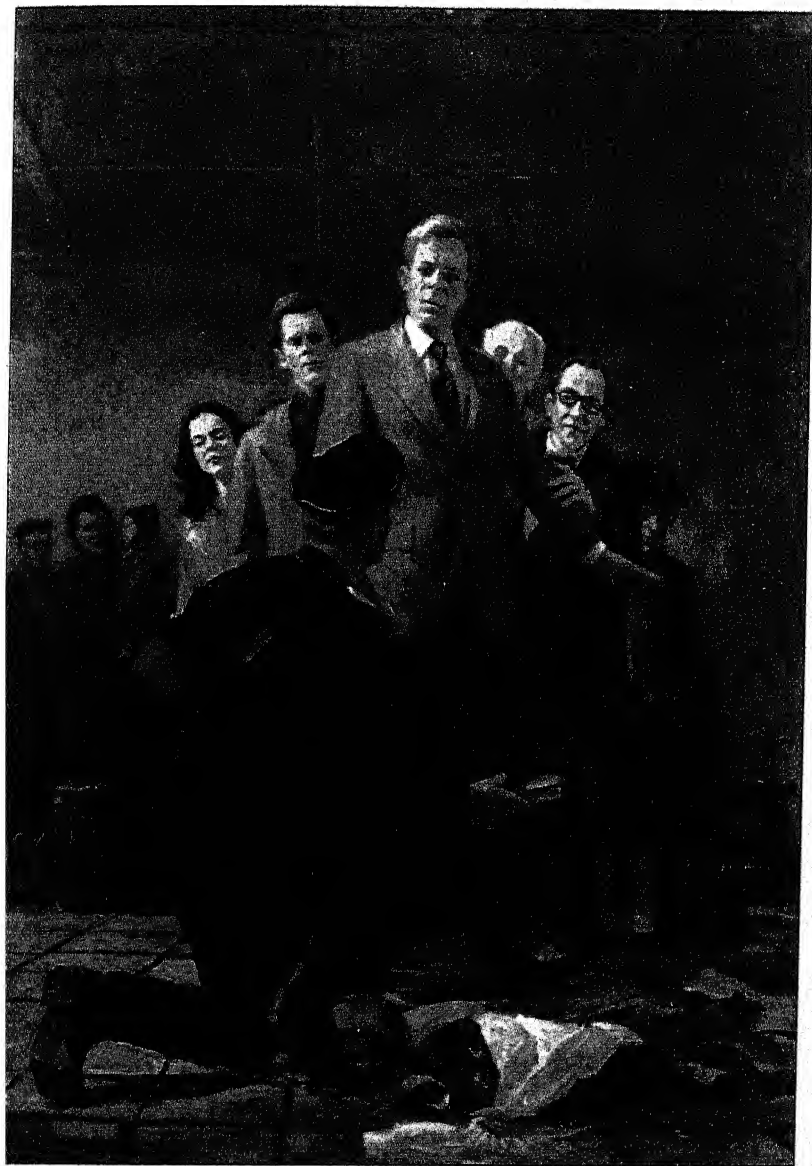
"And they were Jews?"

Byron said, "He's a Methodist, sir, like me. We've been going to church together in Warsaw."

A tall, silver-haired minister named Glenville said, "I can vouch for that. Mr. Hartley is a devout Christian."

The process of sorting out the rest of the Jews was over. A bald SS man with gold leaf on his lapels now approached the Americans. He murmured to the officer, glancing at Hartley. The officer took Hartley's suitcase and undid the straps.

Slote said sharply, "Hold on, sir. This is not a customs point—" But the officer was already spilling the contents of the bag on the floor. He came on the New Testament and with an expression half astounded, half sneering, took it to his superior officer. The bald man examined it, handed it back. "So," he said in German,



"maybe there are no Jews. Come. The train is being delayed."

The SS man rudely gestured at Hartley to pick up his belongings. Scanning the other faces in the group, he stepped up to Natalie. "You're very pretty. Rather dark. What is your ancestry?"

"I'm Italian."

"What is your name?"

"Mona Lisa," she said, and Byron's heart sank.

"I see. You step forward."

Natalie did not move. Slote quickly said, "She's my fiancée. We'll be married next month."

The bald officer shouted from the door, and the SS man roughly handed the roster to Slote. "Very well. You love your Jews. Why do you refuse to take in ours? We have swarms." He walked off.

A loudspeaker called out in German, "All Jews to the restaurant. Everybody else to track seven."

Soldiers halted the crowd at the train to allow diplomats aboard first. Slote muttered to Byron, "I'll take a compartment. You'll see me at the window. Bring Natalie and Mark, and by all means the Reverend Glenville and his wife."

"A million thanks," Hartley whispered, when they were all seated and Slote had slid the door shut. "God bless you."

"Leslie, you did nobly," said the minister.

"Nobly," said Natalie.

Slote gave her an uncertain smile.

"Well, Stockholm ahoy," she said. "I admit one thing. I've lost all curiosity about Berlin."

When the train started, Byron pulled out the envelope he had been given. The message, on a Wehrmacht official form, read: GLAD YOU'RE OKAY. COME STRAIGHT TO BERLIN. DAD.

12

THE train from Königsberg squealed and clanked into Berlin's Friedrichstrasse terminal. Rhoda clutched Victor Henry's arm and jumped up and down; she hadn't seen Byron in over a year.

"My God!" she exclaimed. "Is THAT him coming down those steps? He's a SKELETON."

Byron's chestnut hair was long; the bones stood out in his pale face, and his eyes looked bright and enormous. He was laughing and waving, but his father too almost failed to recognize him. At Byron's yell, "Don't you *know* me, Dad?" Pug plunged toward him, holding Rhoda's hand. Byron embraced him in a fierce, long hug. Then he hugged and kissed his mother.

"Mom, you look beautiful. About twenty-five."

"Well, you look ghastly. I don't know why the devil you were running around in Poland!"

Leslie Slote, ashen and harried, came up and introduced himself to Victor Henry. "I'd like to call on you at the embassy tomorrow, sir," he said, "once I've straightened things out a bit. But let me tell you right now that Byron's been a real help."

"Come in any time," Pug Henry said.

Rhoda sat beside her son as they drove to Grunewald, happily clutching his arm. Byron was her favorite. Secretly, she sympathized with his refusal to consider a naval career, even with his lazy school habits. Warren was a Henry: the A student, the one who got things done. Byron was like her, she thought, a person of fine quality, haunted by an unfulfilled dream.

She asked about the scar on his temple, and he began narrating his odyssey from Kraków to Warsaw, interrupting himself to exclaim at things he saw: a café full of Berliners eating pastry and drinking coffee, a band concert in a park. "It's so damned peaceful! Dad, what's happening in the war? Has Warsaw surrendered? Have the Allies gotten off their tails yet?"

"Warsaw's still holding out, but it's really over. There's talk about peace in the west, too."

"Already? Well, where was I? Oh yes. The next thing was that the fan belt broke. The German planes never stopped going by overhead. There was a cluster of farmhouses about a mile down the road, but they'd been bombed to pieces, so—"

"Farmhouses?" Pug broke in. "The Germans keep claiming that the Luftwaffe attacks only military targets."

Byron laughed. "A military target to the Germans is anything that moves. I was a military target. I saw a thousand houses blown apart, miles from the front."

Pug was thinking that Byron's story might make an intelligence report. The Germans were publishing photographs of Polish peasants cheering the invaders, and of smiling Jews being fed at soup kitchens. Byron's tale cast an interesting light on all this.

At the Grunewald house, they went into the garden and sat sipping drinks while Byron talked on and on. He described the siege of Warsaw with extraordinary clarity and detail. The blue-gray Berlin evening drew on and still Byron talked, drinking steadily—an astonishingly coherent performance.

At dinner he finally stopped talking. Apparently his own voice had been keeping him awake, because between the soup and the meat courses his head nodded and dropped on his chest.

"I was wondering how long he'd last," Pug said.

Later, when they had got Byron to bed and were strolling in the garden, Pug said, "Quite a change in him."

"It's that girl," said Rhoda.

"He didn't say much about her."

"That's my point. He said nothing about her. Yet he went to Poland because of her, and got caught in Kraków on account of her. Seems to me he did almost everything but become a Jew." Pug looked coldly at her, but she went on, "Maybe you can find out about her from this man Slote. She must be some girl."

TOPPING the pile of letters on Pug's desk the following morning was a pale green envelope engraved in one corner: THE WHITE HOUSE. Inside he found a slanted scrawl in heavy pencil:

You were dead right again, old top. The ambassadors got hopping mad at the very idea of our buying their ocean liners. Write me a letter when you get a chance, about your life in Berlin—who your German friends are, what people are saying, what a loaf of bread costs. Washington is still incredibly hot and muggy, though the leaves have started turning.

FDR

Pug stared at this curiously banal communication from his Commander in Chief, the man with perhaps the best known name and face on earth except Hitler's. He was drafting his reply when the

yeoman's buzzer sounded. "There's a Mr. Slote to see you, sir."

The Foreign Service man looked rested, if a bit gaunt. Over coffee, Pug told him about Byron's four-hour gush of narrative. Slote listened with a wary look. "Did he mention that unfortunate business before we were evacuated? When we had Natalie Jastrow in the car, and found ourselves under German shellfire?"

Pug thought a moment. "No. I don't think so."

Slote brightened up. "Well, he exposed himself to enemy fire while I had to take Natalie out of the car and find shelter for her." Slote baldly narrated his version of the episode. Then he described Byron's water hauling, his disregard of the bombing and shelling. "I'd be glad to put it all in a letter," he said.

"Yes, I'd like that," Pug said. "Now, about this Jastrow girl. What was she doing in Warsaw, and why was he with her?"

Slote laughed wryly. "She came to see me. We're old friends. I did my best to stop her, but she does what she pleases. Her uncle didn't want her to travel alone, so Byron went too."

"Is she beautiful?"

Slote looked thoughtful. "In a way. Quite a brain, very educated." Abruptly he stood up. "I'll write you that letter, and I'm mentioning your son in my official report."

"Good. You're not engaged to the Jastrow girl?"

"No, I'm not."

"I hate to get personal," Pug said, "but you're older than Byron and quite different. I can't picture a girl who bridges that gap." Slote said nothing. Pug went on, "Where is she now?"

"She went to Stockholm. Good-by, Commander Henry."

WHEN Pug got home, Byron was reclining in the garden, eating grapes and reading a *Superman* comic book. On the grass beside him were many more comic books. "Hi, Dad," he said. "How about this treasure? Franz collects them." (Franz was the butler.) "He says he's been buying them from tourists for years."

Comic books had been a cause of trouble all of Byron's boyhood. Pug had forbidden them, but to no effect. With difficulty he refrained from saying something harsh. "How do you feel?"

"Hungry," Byron said. "Hey, this is a great *Superman*."

Franz brought Pug a highball on a tray. Pug sat silently with it while Franz wiped a glass-top table and cut some flowers. He had a way of lingering within earshot. At last he went back inside, and Pug relaxed. "Briny, that was quite a tale you told us."

The son laughed. "I guess I got carried away, seeing you and Mom again. Also Berlin had a funny effect on me."

"You've had access to unusual information. I want you to write it all up so I can forward it to Naval Intelligence."

"Gosh, Dad, aren't you overestimating it?"

"No. I'd like you to get at it tonight. There's a typewriter in the library."

"Well, okay." With such casual assents Byron had often dodged his homework, but Pug was hoping that he had matured.

Byron left the house after dinner and returned at two in the morning carrying a copy of *Mein Kampf* in English. Pug was awake, working in the library. His son blithely told him he had gone to the opera. Next day when Pug left the house Byron was lounging on the back porch, drinking coffee and reading *Mein Kampf*. At seven in the evening he was in the same place, drinking a highball and well into the thick tome.

Pug said, "Did you start on that report?"

"I'll get to it, Dad."

He went out again at night, returned late, and fell asleep with his clothes on, an old habit that ground on Pug's nerves. He woke around eleven and found himself under the covers, his clothes draped on a chair with a note: "Write that damned report."

He was idling along the Kurfürstendamm that afternoon, with *Mein Kampf* under his arm, when Slote went hurrying by, halted, and turned. "That's luck. I've been trying to get hold of you. Are you coming back to the States with us? We fly to Oslo Thursday, then to London."

"I'm not sure. How about some coffee and pastry? Let's be a couple of Berliners."

"Why not? I skipped lunch."

They sat in an enormous sidewalk café among potted flowering bushes, with a brass band playing waltzes in the sunshine. "Gosh, this is the life," Byron said, as they gave their orders. "Did you

ever see a nicer city? Look at all these polite, happy Berliners. The only thing is, these pleasant folks have just been pounding a city as nice as Berlin to a horrible pulp. It's a puzzle."

Slote smiled. "No doubt Paris was as charming as ever while Napoleon was out doing his butcheries."

"Slote, the Germans are really strange! I've been reading this, their leader's book, to try to figure them out. It's the writing of an absolute nut. The Jews are secretly running the world, he says. They're the capitalists, but they're the Bolsheviks too, and they're conspiring to destroy the German people, who by rights should *really* be running the world. Have I got it right so far?"

"A bit simplified, but yes—pretty much."

"Okay. Now, all these nice Berliners *like* this guy. Haven't they read his book? How come they didn't put him in a padded cell?"

Slote said in a low tone, "Are you just discovering the phenomenon of Adolf Hitler?"

"Getting shot in the head sort of called my attention to it. Do *you* understand the Germans?"

Slote answered with a wry little smile of academic condescension. "I have an opinion, the result of a lot of study."

"Can I hear it? I'm interested."

"It's a long, involved story, Byron. Some other time—"

"Just tell me the books to read, then, and I'll study them too."

Slote picked up Byron's *Mein Kampf*, and on the flyleaf he listed authors and titles. Byron recognized only a few names, such as Spengler, Luther, Hegel, Nietzsche. Slote drew a line and added more authors, of whom Byron recognized even fewer: Santayana, Mann, Veblen. "These below the line are critics and political analysts," Slote remarked. "Above are some German antecedents of Hitler. I think you must grasp these to grasp him."

Byron said dolefully, "Really? Why Luther, for pity's sake?"

Slote pulled at his pipe. "My view is that Hitler and the Nazis grew out of the heart of German culture—a cancer, maybe, but a uniquely German phenomenon. Others insist the same thing could have happened anywhere, given the same conditions: defeat in war, a harsh peace treaty, ruinous inflation. But—"

The waiter was approaching. Slote drank coffee until he was

out of sight again. Then he resumed. "But to me Nazism is unthinkable without German nineteenth-century thought: romanticism, idealism, nationalism, the whole outpouring. Every word of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, for instance, is basic." He shoved *Mein Kampf* back to Byron. "Well, are you coming to Oslo?"

"What are Natalie's plans after Stockholm? She got kind of snappish with me toward the end and wouldn't talk much."

"She was disagreeable and vague with me too. I really don't know." Slote hesitated. "I'll tell you something, though, that possibly you'd be better off knowing."

"Go ahead."

"I asked her whether you planned to return to Siena. Her answer was, 'I sincerely hope I never see Byron Henry again, and if you ever get a chance, please tell him so with my compliments.' You look surprised. I'd thought you'd had an argument, but I guess she was just in a gruesome mood."

Byron shook his head. "I can't say I've ever understood her."

Slote glanced at the check and paid it. "Well, I'll tell you, Byron, I've had no peace of mind since the day I met her."

"Why don't you marry her?" Byron said.

Slote had risen. He looked down at Byron for several seconds. "I'm not at all sure I won't, if she'll have me."

"Oh, she'll have you. Look, I guess I'll stay on here with my folks for a while. I won't go to Oslo."

Slote held out his hand. "All right. Good luck."

13

RHODA Henry had always enjoyed the attention of men, and, being a beauty, had not lacked opportunities for affairs. But she believed that a married woman ought to be true and good. In almost twenty-five years of marriage she had been as faithful to Pug as he had been to her.

Nevertheless, during Pug's absence in the States she had tangled herself in a romance. There was something liberating in the start of a war. Suddenly the old rules seemed out of date when the whole world was shaking itself loose from the past.

Dr. Palmer Kirby was a shy, serious man in his middle fifties, a person Rhoda would have described as "one of those ghastly BRAINS." The evening of her dinner party, just to be sociable, she tried her usual coquettish babble on Kirby over the cocktails. "I've put you on my right, Dr. Kirby, and since my husband's away, we can make HAY while the sun shines."

"Um. On your right. Thank you."

That had almost been the end of it. Rhoda detested such heavy men. But he had mentioned at dinner that he was going next day to a factory in Brandenburg. Because she wanted to see that medieval town and he was, officially, Pug's guest, she offered to drive him. On the way they had lunch at an inn. Over a bottle of Moselle he started to talk about his work. At an alert question she asked him—living with Pug, Rhoda had learned to follow technical talk—Kirby suddenly smiled. It was a coarse male smile of knowledge and appetite, far from disagreeable but, in him, startling.

"Do you really care, Mrs. Henry?" said Dr. Kirby. "I have a horror of boring a beautiful woman."

The smile, the words, the tone, all disclosed that he had missed none of her coquetry; that on the contrary, he liked her. A bit flustered, she touched a hand to her hair. "I assure you, it sounds fascinating. Just use words of one syllable when you can."

"Okay." And he told her all about magnetic amplifiers, "magamps," devices for precise control of voltages and currents.

Asking adroit questions, Rhoda soon drew out the key facts about him. At the California Institute of Technology he had written his doctoral thesis on electromagnetism. At forty he had decided to manufacture magnetic amplifiers. The long struggle for financing had nearly sunk him, but it was now paying off. War industries demanded magamps in quantity, and he was first in the field. He had come to Germany because the Germans were ahead of the United States in the quality of some components. He was studying their techniques and buying their nickel-alloy cores.

She also learned that he was a widower and a grandfather. He talked about his dead wife, and then they exchanged long confidences about their children's faults and virtues. Rhoda was the kind of woman who can dazzle a man by piling everything into

the shopwindow. Palmer Kirby ordered a second bottle of Moselle, and they got to Brandenburg late.

When they returned to Berlin, Kirby asked her to dinner and to the opera. It seemed quite natural to accept. Rhoda rushed home and began raking through her clothes and working on her hair. She kept Kirby waiting for an hour. In girlhood she always kept boys waiting. Pug had harshly cured her of this, for navy social life began and ended by the clock. Keeping Palmer Kirby waiting was a delicious self-indulgence. It almost made Rhoda feel nineteen again.

The opera was *La Traviata*, which they discovered they both loved. Afterward he proposed a glimpse of the notorious Berlin night life. Rhoda giggled. "Well, thank you for a disreputable suggestion. Let's hope we don't run into any of my friends."

So they ended the evening sipping champagne and watching a hefty blonde fling her naked body about in blue smoky gloom. Kirby's long solemn face showed faint distaste. Rhoda, never having seen a nude dancer before, was aroused and agreeably shocked.

After that, until her husband returned, Rhoda spent a lot of time with Kirby. In her own vocabulary, she never "did anything." When Pug came back, the adventure stopped.

A FAREWELL lunch at Wannsee for Palmer Kirby was Rhoda's idea, but she got Sally Forrest to give it, saying that she had entertained him enough. It was a few days after Byron arrived, and he drove them all to the beach resort in an embassy car.

Midway through the excellent lunch, a loudspeaker crackled and a voice said in German, "Attention! You are about to hear an announcement of the highest importance to the fatherland." A total stillness blanketed the restaurant. "From Supreme Headquarters of the Führer. Warsaw has fallen."

The restaurant rang with applause and cheers. Brass-band music—first "*Deutschland über Alles*," then the "*Horst Wessel Lied*"—came pouring out of the loudspeakers. Except for the Americans, everyone in the Kaiserpavillon rose, most of them making the Nazi salute. Victor Henry's skin prickled as he looked around. Then he noticed something he had not seen for twenty

Byron had taken pain and punishment dry-eyed since the
of five, but now he was crying.

The seated Americans were getting hostile glares. Their waiter,
herto all genial, expert service, stood sneering at them. When
he songs ended he started removing plates with a jerky clatter,
spilling gravy and wine.

"Watch what you're doing, please," Colonel Forrest said.

The waiter went on with his brusque, sloppy clearing. Sally
Forrest gave a little yelp as he struck her head with a plate.

Pug said to him, "Call your headwaiter, please."

"Headwaiter? I am the headwaiter. I am *your* head. We're busy
in this restaurant." The man laughed and walked off.

Forrest said, "It might be smart to leave."

"We haven't had our dessert," Pug said.

The waiter was striding past them to another table. Victor Henry
called, "*Stop. Turn around!*" His dry, sharp tone cut through the
restaurant gabble. The waiter turned. "*Call your headwaiter. Do
it immediately!*" Commander Henry looked straight into the
waiter's eyes, his face hard. The man's glance shifted as he walked
away. People at nearby tables were staring and muttering.

"I think we should go," Sally Forrest said. "This isn't worth the
trouble."

The waiter reappeared with a man in a frock coat, who said with
an unfriendly air, "You have a complaint?"

"We're Americans, neutrals," Pug said sternly. "We didn't rise
for your anthem. This waiter chose to be rude and sloppy. Tell
him to behave, and let us have a clean cloth for our dessert."

As Victor Henry rapped the sentences out, the headwaiter's
expression kept changing, until all at once he burst out in a howl
of abuse at the waiter. After a short, fierce tantrum, he turned to
Pug and bowed. "You will be properly served. My apologies."

Now a peculiar thing happened. Without turning a hair, the
waiter reverted to his former manner. He cleared the dishes and
spread a new cloth. He smiled, he bowed, and he took their dessert
orders with arch jests about calories.

"I'll be damned," said Colonel Forrest.

"Well done," Kirby said to Pug, with an odd glance at Rhoda.

"Oh, Pug has a way about him." Rhoda smiled.

"Okay, Dad," Byron said. Victor Henry shot him a quick look. It was the one remark that gratified him.

THAT night after dinner, Rhoda said, "I see you've brought home a pile of work, Pug. I thought we might see that new Emil Jannings movie. But I can get one of the girls to come along."

"Go ahead. I'm no fan of Emil Jannings."

Rhoda left the father and son drinking coffee on the terrace. "Briny, how's that report coming?" Pug asked.

"The report? Oh, yes, the report. Dad, what would you think of my joining the British navy? Or the RAF?"

Victor Henry blinked and took a while to answer. "You want to fight the Germans? I thought a military career was o-u-t out."

"This isn't a career, Dad."

"Briny, I don't think the Allies are going to make a deal with Hitler, but a peace effort's coming up. Suppose you join the British, possibly lose your citizenship—and then the war's off? Why not ask for active duty in *our* navy? You've got your commission. And the reserves who go out to sea now will draw the best duty if and when the action starts."

"And *then* if the war ends? I'd be in for years."

"You're not doing anything else."

"I've written to Dr. Jastrow. I'm waiting to hear from him."

The father dropped the subject.

Rhoda did go to see the movie, but first she picked up Dr. Palmer Kirby at his hotel and drove him to Tempelhof airport. She had offered to do this and Kirby had accepted. Perhaps there would have been no harm in telling her husband, but she didn't. She felt bittersweet excitement. It was a long, long time since a man had seemed as attractive to her as Palmer Kirby did.

"Well, I guess this is it," he said, as they sat over drinks in the airport lounge. He raised his glass. "Your happiness."

"Oh, that. I've had that." She sipped. "Did they give you the connection to Lisbon that you wanted?"

"Yes, but the Pan Am Clippers are jammed. I may be hung up in Lisbon for days."

"I envy you."

"Come along."

"Oh, Palmer, don't tease me. Tell me what you think of Pug."

"Hm. That's a tough one." The engineer pushed his lips out ruefully. "My first impression was—frankly—that he was a rather narrow-minded sea dog. But he has a keen intellect and he's terrifically on the ball. He's a hard man to know, really."

Rhoda laughed. "After all these years, I don't know him too well myself. But I suspect he's really something simple and almost obsolete. He's a patriot."

"Well, I've come to admire him." Kirby frowned at his drink. "Rhoda, let me just say this. You're a wonderful woman. I've been a sad, dull man since my wife died, but you've made me feel very much alive again, and I'm grateful. Does this offend you?"

"Don't be a fool. It pleases me very much. Oh, damn." Rhoda took out a handkerchief and touched her eyes with it. "Thanks for the drink, Palmer. You'd better go to your plane."

"Look, don't be upset," he said, as they rose.

She smiled at him, her eyes tearful. "You might write, just once in a while, so I'll know you're alive and well."

"Of course I will."

Rhoda reached up and kissed him on the lips.

BYRON at last wrote the report on his adventures in Poland. His father, suppressing his annoyance over the five vapid pages, spent an afternoon dictating to his yeoman everything he remembered of Byron's tale. His son read the seventeen-page result with astonishment. "Ye gods, Dad, what a memory you have."

"Fix it any way you want. Make sure it's factually unchallengeable and let me have it back by Friday."

Victor Henry forwarded the report to the Office of Naval Intelligence. The cool autumn days went by and Berlin began taking on an almost peacetime appearance. Three or four times a week Byron played tennis with his father, and slowly he lost his famished look and regained his strength. He pounced on the mail every morning, searching in vain for a letter from Siena.

When the Führer made his Reichstag speech offering peace to

England and France, early in October, Pug took his son along. To Byron's surprise, Hitler seemed a diminutive actor, weakly impersonating the grandiose historymaker. Speaking in a pedestrian tone, Hitler began with some brazen assertions about the Polish campaign: a powerful Poland had attempted to destroy Germany, but the brave Wehrmacht had punished this aggression.

Byron was stupefied, not so much by the lies—*Mein Kampf* was full of those—but by their pointlessness. The true facts had been reported by the world press. Yet here, with so many seats reserved for neutral diplomats, Hitler was uttering vulnerable nonsense.

Hitler went on to "offer an outstretched hand" to the British and the French. "Surely if forty-six million Englishmen can claim to rule over forty million square kilometers of the earth, then it cannot be wrong," he said mildly, "for eighty-two million Germans to demand the right to live on eight hundred thousand square kilometers of soil that are historically their own." He was talking about his new order in central Europe. The British and French could have peace simply by accepting things as they now were, he said. At the end he fell into his old style, howling and shaking both fists as he pictured the horrors of a full-scale war.

The German radio and press made a great to-do about Hitler's "outstretched hand" peace proposal. Italy and Japan hailed him as the greatest peacemaker of all time. A mighty, popular surge for peace was sweeping western Europe and America, but "Churchillian" warmongers were trying to stamp out this warm response to the Führer's offer. If they succeeded, the most ghastly bloodbath of all time would follow, and history would know whom to blame.

Into this confusing noise came an electric shock of news. A German U-boat had sneaked into the British fleet anchorage in Scapa Flow, at the northern tip of Scotland, and sunk the battleship *Royal Oak*. News pictures showed Hitler shaking hands with the U-boat's captain, Günther Prien. Goebbels' broadcasters foamed with ecstasy over Churchill's sad praise of Prien's skill and daring.

A small reception was held for neutral military attachés to meet Prien. Victor Henry put his son's name on the list, with the rank "Ensign, USNR," and Byron received a card. The Henrys dined before the reception at the apartment of Commander Grobke.

Byron, prepared to detest the Grobkes, found them disconcertingly normal. But when the talk got around to Hitler's offer to the Allies, Grobke launched into a tirade about Roosevelt's being the one man on whom peace depended. "If Roosevelt tells Britain and France tomorrow," he said, "I'm not helping you against Germany, we'll all have a hundred years of prosperity. And it's the only way your President can make sure Japan won't jump on your back."

It occurred to Victor Henry, not for the first time, that his meeting with Grobke on the *Bremen* had probably not been accidental.

Günther Prien looked surprised and interested when Byron's turn came in the reception line of floridly uniformed attachés. "You are young," he said in German, scrutinizing Byron's well-cut dark suit. "Are you a submariner?"

"No. Maybe I should be."

Prien said with a charming grin, "Ach, it's the only service."

Byron listened as intently as his father to the U-boat captain's talk. It was an amazing and inspiring tale. Prien had gone in on the surface, in the dark of the moon. Inside the anchorage, he had fired four torpedoes, of which one had hit the *Royal Oak*. Evidently not believing that there could be a U-boat inside Scapa Flow, the British had taken the hit for an internal explosion, and no submarine alarm had been sounded. Prien had then made a big slow circle to reload tubes, his U-boat silhouetted by the northern lights. Finally he had shot four more torpedoes.

"We made three hits that time," Prien said. "We blew up the magazines, and the *Royal Oak* went down almost at once."

He did not gloat. Nor did he express regret over the hundreds of drowned British sailors. The odds had been that he, and not they, would die in the night's work. This was not Warsaw, Byron thought, nor the strafing of women and children on country roads.

As Pug Henry and his son drove home, Byron said, "Dad, didn't you ever consider submarines?"

The father shook his head. "No, but Prien's a lot like our own submariners. I almost forgot that he was talking German."

"Well, that's what I'd have picked," Byron said, "if I'd gone in."

"If you're actually interested—"

"No thanks, Dad." The young man laughed.

Victor Henry, often tried to talk submarines again, but never drew another glint of interest.

He spent a week with Byron touring German shipyards and factories. Pug enjoyed traveling with his son, for Byron never got angry, and always rose to emergencies: an overbooked plane, missing luggage, a mix-up over hotel reservations. And he could sit for two hours listening to plant managers and yard superintendents, replying when spoken to with something short and apt.

"This is the Germany to worry about," Byron remarked after a visit to the Krupp works in Essen.

Pug nodded. "The German industrial plant is the pistol Hitler is pointing at the world's head. Our own is bigger, by far, but Hitler isn't giving it a second thought, because there's no national will to use it. Germany can run the world, if nobody argues."

A few days after the British and French rejected the Führer's outstretched hand, a letter arrived from Aaron Jastrow:

October 5

Dear Byron:

Natalie is not here. I've had one letter from her, written in London. She'll try to come back to Siena for a while, she says, and frankly I need her. She feels a responsibility for her bumbling uncle, which is very comforting. You have no such tie, and though I would really like having you, I can't encourage you to come. If I suddenly decided to leave, think of the expense you'd have put yourself to. For your sake I must recommend that you forget about Siena, Constantine, and the Jastrows.

Thank you for all you did for my niece. I gather from her letter—not from your far too modest note—that you saved her from danger, perhaps from death. How glad I am that you went!

My warmest regards to your parents. I talked briefly with your father on the telephone. He sounded like a splendid man.

Faithfully yours,

Aaron Jastrow

WHEN Byron got home that evening he took one look at his father's face and went to his room until dinnertime. Rhoda endured her husband's glowering silence at the table until the dessert came. "All right, Pug," she said, "what's it all about?"

"Get the letter on my dresser, please," he said to Byron.

"So?" Rhoda said, as Byron came back with a pink envelope. "It's only from Madeline." She scanned the letter. "What's wrong with this? That's quite a raise, twenty dollars a week."

"Read the last page."

"I am. Well! I see what you mean."

"Twenty years old," Pug said. "Living alone in New York! And I was the fusspot, about not wanting her to leave school."

"She'll be all right, Pug. She's as straitlaced as you."

Pug turned to Byron. "You'll be going back, won't you? Maybe you could find a job in New York and keep an eye on her."

"As a matter of fact, I got a letter too. From Dr. Jastrow. I'm going to Siena."

Rhoda said, "Isn't that something we should all discuss?"

"Is that girl there?" Pug said.

"No. She's in England."

"What do you propose to use for money?"

"I have enough. I saved nearly all I made."

"And you'll do what? Literary research up in an Italian mountain town, with a war on?"

"If I get called to active duty, I'll go."

"That's damned bighearted, seeing that if you didn't, the navy would track you down and put you in the brig for a few years. Well, you must do as you please." Victor Henry left the table.

14

Sitzkrieg

From "World Empire Lost"

The quiescent half year between the fall of Warsaw and the Norway campaign of April 1940 became known in the west as the "phony" war. We called it the *sitzkrieg*, or "sitting war."

Early in this period, the Führer delivered his "outstretched hand" speech to the Reichstag. Like most of his political moves, and unlike his military ones, it was cleverly conceived. Had the Allies swallowed it, we might have achieved surprise in the west with a November attack, which Hitler had ordered when Warsaw fell, and which we were fever-

ishly planning. But by now the western statesmen had developed a certain wariness and their response was disappointing. In the event this did not matter, for a combination of bad weather and insoluble supply problems forced one postponement after another on the impatient Führer. In all, the attack on France was postponed twenty-nine times.

During this lull, life in Paris, we gathered, was gayer than for years. The British Prime Minister Chamberlain epitomized the western frame of mind: "Hitler has missed the bus." But we were not sitting. In this half year, German war production began to rise and—despite the Führer's never-ending interference—a new and excellent strategy for the assault was at last hammered out.

The sitzkrieg lull was temporarily enlivened when the Soviet Union attacked Finland. Stalin had a big appetite, and his unvarying policy after signing the Ribbentrop pact was to seize whatever territory he could. He now saw his chance to take over the Karelian Isthmus and dominate the Gulf of Finland. But to the world's surprise the attack went badly. From November 1939 to March 1940 the Finns bravely fought off the Slav horde, until finally overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. Thus Stalin's goal was achieved, at ruthless cost, of shaping up the Leningrad front by pushing back our Finnish friends on the Karelian Isthmus. It must be confessed that this move probably saved Leningrad in 1941; and the Red Army's disgraceful performance in Finland certainly misled us later in our plans for the eastern front.

At the time, the Russo-Finnish War posed an acute problem for us, because England and France could use "aid to Finland" as a perfect pretext for landing in Norway and driving across Scandinavia. This would have been disastrous. The North Sea, bracketed by British bases on both sides, would have been closed to our U-boats and, even more important, to the ships bringing us Swedish iron ore, which in winter sailed along the Norwegian coast. Of such a plot we had hard intelligence. And from Winston Churchill's memoirs we now know that a British invasion was laid on for a date ahead of ours, and then put off, so that we beat the British into Norway by the merest luck, by a matter of days.

When the High Command convinced Hitler of these risks, he issued the order for the occupation of Norway. The operation was a great success, not because of his leadership but in spite of it. We took heavy losses at sea, especially of destroyers which we sorely missed when the invasion of England was later planned. But the price was small

compared with the gain. We opened up a much wider coastline to counter the blockade, and secured the Swedish iron ore without which we could not have gone on fighting for long. With our occupation of Norway, the sitzkrieg was over.

15

"BYRON!" Dr. Jastrow gasped. He sat on the terrace, a blue blanket over his legs, his writing board and yellow pad on his lap. Across the valley, the red-walled town atop the vineyard-checked hills looked hauntingly like the medieval Siena in old frescoes.

"Hello, A.J."

"Dear me, Byron! We were talking about you only at breakfast. We were both absolutely certain you'd be in the States by now."

"Natalie's here?"

"Of course. She's up in the library."

"Sir, will you excuse me?"

"Yes, go ahead, let me collect myself—"

She was standing at the desk in a gray sweater and black skirt, looking pale and wide-eyed. "It is you! Nobody else galumphs up those stairs like that. Why didn't you say you were coming?"

"Well, I thought I'd better just come."

She approached him and put a hand uncertainly to his face. "Anyway, you look rested. You've put on some weight." She backed off abruptly. "I owe you an apology. I was feeling beastly that day in Königsberg, and if I was rude to you I'm sorry." She went to her desk and sat down. "Well, we can use you, but surprises like this are never pleasant. Don't you know that yet?" As though he had returned from an errand in town, she started typing.

That was all his welcome. Jastrow put him to work, and within a few days it was as though neither Byron nor Natalie had ever left the quiet hilltop. The traces of war were few, though sporadic shortages of gasoline had made the buses unreliable. Because of this, Jastrow gave Byron lodging in a cramped little maid's room on the third floor, directly above Natalie's room. Her distant manner persisted, and Byron thought he had probably annoyed her by following her here. But he was content to be with her again.

One or two letters a week came to her from Leslie Slote, but whereas in the spring she had rushed off to her bedroom to read them, now she casually skimmed them wherever she happened to be. One rainy day she was reading such a letter at her desk when Byron, typing away, heard her say, "Good God!"

He looked up. "Something the matter?"

She hesitated, her face red. "Oh, hell. I've got to tell someone. Guess what I hold in my hot little hand? A proposal of marriage from Leslie Slote. What do you think of that, Byron Henry?"

"Congratulations," Byron said.

The buzzer on Natalie's desk sounded. "Oh, Lord. Briny, please see what A.J. wants. I'm in a fog."

Dr. Jastrow sat by the fire in the downstairs study facing a fat uniformed Italian official who was drinking coffee. Byron had never seen the man before. "Oh, Byron," Jastrow said, "ask Natalie for my resident status file, will you? She knows where it is."

"What's doing?" Natalie asked, and her face sobered when Byron told her. She unlocked a small steel file and gave him a manila folder. "Does it look like trouble? Shall I come down?"

"I don't think you need."

As he descended the stairs, he heard laughter and jovial talk. "Oh, thank you, Byron." Jastrow broke into English as he entered, and then resumed an anecdote in Italian, about a donkey that had gotten into the grounds, laid waste to a vegetable patch, and chewed up a whole chapter of manuscript. The official's belly shook with laughter. Byron decided he needn't bring Natalie down.

At dinner that night, however, Dr. Jastrow hardly spoke, ate less than usual, and drank two extra glasses of wine. Finally Natalie said, "Aaron, what was that visit about today?"

Jastrow shook his head. "Strangely enough, Giuseppe again." Giuseppe was the assistant gardener, a lazy, stupid old drunkard whom Jastrow had recently discharged. It was Giuseppe who had left open the gate through which the donkey had entered.

"How does that man know Giuseppe?" Byron said.

"That's the odd part. He's from the alien registration bureau in Florence, yet he mentioned Giuseppe's nine children and the difficulty of finding work nowadays. When I said I'd rehire Giuseppe,

that ended it. He just handed me the registration papers." Jastrow sighed. "I've put up with Giuseppe so long, I don't mind. I'm rather tired. Tell Maria I'll have my fruit and cheese in the study."

Natalie said when the professor was gone, "Let's take the coffee to my room." Never before had she invited him there. Byron followed her upstairs with a jumping pulse.

"I live in a big candy box," she said, with a self-conscious look. "Aaron bought the place furnished, you know, and left it just the way it was. Ridiculous for me, but—"

It was an enormous room with gilt furniture, pink silk draperies, and pink cupids on a blue-and-gold ceiling. Natalie lit the log fire in the carved marble fireplace, and they sat in facing armchairs.

"Why do you suppose Aaron's so upset?" Natalie said. "Giuseppe's an old story. Actually it was a mistake to fire him. He's a good gardener, even if he is a dirty old drunk."

"A.J. was coerced," Byron said. "We're at the mercy of these people, A.J. more than us. He owns property here."

"Oh, the Italians are all right. They're not Germans." She bit her lip. "I've shut Warsaw from my mind. Or tried to."

"I don't blame you. I keep dreaming about it."

"Oh, God, so do I. That hospital, night after night—" Sudden gloom shadowed Natalie's face. She poured more coffee for both of them. "Stir the fire, Briny. I'm cold."

He made the fire flare, and she jumped up and stood by it. "That moment in the railroad station," she burst out nervously, "when they took away the Jews! I still can't face it. That's why I was so nasty at Königsberg. I was in torture, thinking I could have done something—said I was Jewish, created a scene. It might have made a difference. But we calmly went to the train with Leslie, and they trudged off the other way. Well—" She threw up her hands in a despairing gesture and dropped into her chair. "Speaking of old Sloté," she said, "what do you think of his proposal to make an honest woman of me?"

"I'm not surprised."

"I'm stunned. I never thought I'd live to see the day."

"He told me in Berlin he might marry you. He'd be crazy not to, if he could."

"Well, he's had that option open to him for a hell of a long time, dear." She looked darkly at him over the rim of her coffee cup. "What else did Slote say about me?"

The low, vibrant voice, the amused glint of her eyes in the firelight stirred Byron. "That you were no girl for me, and that he hadn't known an hour's peace since he first laid eyes on you."

"Two accurate statements, my pet. But didn't he really tell you about him and me?" Byron shook his head. Natalie said, "I think I'd like a little brandy."

He raced downstairs and returned with a bottle and two snifters. Swirling the brandy around in the balloon glass, Natalie broke loose with a rush of words about Leslie Slote. It was a familiar tale of a clever older man having fun with a girl and getting snared into a real passion. Resolving to marry him, she had made his life a misery. At last she had him where she wanted him.

Byron hated every word, yet he was grateful. The closemouthed girl was taking him into her life, and this was what he had been starved for. Natalie was the one person who meant as much to him as his father did. In the same way, almost, he hungered to talk to his father, to listen to him, to be with him, even though he knew that he often offended or disappointed Victor Henry. His father was terrific, and in that way Natalie was terrific, entirely aside from being a tall dark girl whom he had hopelessly craved to seize in his arms since the first hour they had met.

"Well, there you have it," she said. "What puzzles me is why he's throwing in the towel now. The trouble is, I think I know."

"He's lonesome for you," Byron said.

Natalie shook her head. "That day with the Swedish ambassador I despised Leslie's panic, and I let him know I did. Since then *he's* been chasing *me*, and I've been doing the running." She tossed off most of her brandy. "I know cowardice isn't something you can help, and he behaved well enough at the railroad station. But this proposal to me is his way of apologizing and being a man, and that's not quite the answer to my maidenly prayers."

"It's what you want."

"Well, I don't know. My parents had wild fits when I told them I was in love with a Christian. And then there's Aaron."

"Well, he survived while we were away."

"That's what you think. You should have seen the library and study when I got back. He hadn't written anything in weeks. He can't even sharpen a pencil properly." Natalie was talking breathlessly. "And there's still another complication. The biggest."

"What's that?"

"Don't you know, Briny?"

He said, or rather stammered, because the sudden penetrating sexuality in her glance made him drunk, "I don't think I do."

"All right then, I'll tell you. You've done it, you devil, and you know it. I'm in love with you." She peered at him, her eyes shining and enormous. "Ye gods, what a dumb stunned face. Don't you believe me?"

Very hoarsely he said, "I just hope it's true."

He got out of his chair and went to her. She jumped up, and they kissed and kissed. She thrust her hands in his hair, she caressed his face. "Oh God," she said. "That smile. Those hands. I love to watch your hands. I love the way you move. You're so sweet." It was like a hundred daydreams Byron had had, only the perfume of her hair couldn't be daydreamed, nor the moist, warm sweet breath of her mouth. Above all gleamed the inconceivable wonder that all this was happening.

At last she pulled away. "I had to do that or *die*. I've never felt anything like this in my life, Byron. I've been fighting it because it's no damn good, you know. You're a boy. I won't have it. Not a Christian. Not again." She put both hands over her face. "Oh. Oh! Don't look at me like that, Briny! Go out of my bedroom."

Wanting to please her, Byron turned to go. She said in the next breath, "You see, you're a gentleman. It's one of the unbelievable things about you. My darling, I don't want to put you out. I just don't want to make any false moves. I absolutely adore you."

He was dazed with happiness beyond imagining. "Listen, would you think of marrying me?" he said.

Natalie's eyes popped wide open and her mouth dropped. Byron burst out laughing at the comic change of her face, and that made her laugh crazily too. "God in heaven," she gasped, flinging herself into his arms, "you're incredible."



"I'm serious," he said. "I've always wanted to marry you. It seemed preposterous, but if you love me—"

"It is preposterous. But where you're concerned I appear to be quite mindless, and perhaps—well!" She kissed him once more. "The first idea was right. You leave. Good night, darling. I know you're serious, and I'm terribly touched."

On his narrow bed in the tiny attic room, Byron lay wide-awake. He could still feel her lips, smell her perfume. His feverish mind ran on what he must do next. The window was turning violet when he fell asleep in a jumble of ideas, ranging from medical school and short-story writing to the banking business. Some distant cousins of his mother controlled a bank in Washington.

It was almost eleven when Byron hurried into the library. Natalie gave him one ardent glance and went on with her typing. On his desk was a pile of first-draft pages heavily scribbled with Jastrow's corrections, to which was clipped a note in red crayon: "Let me have this material at lunch, please."

"A.J. looked in just now," Natalie said, "and made vile noises."

"I'm sorry, but I didn't close my eyes till dawn."

"Didn't you?" she said, with a secret little smile. "I slept exceedingly well."

He began to type. A hand rested warmly on his neck. "Let's see." She looked down at him with affectionate amusement. Pinned on her old brown wool dress was the gold brooch with purple stones from Warsaw. She had never before worn it. She took some of the pages. "Poor Briny. Type your head off, and so will I."

They did not finish the work before lunch, but by then, as it turned out, Dr. Jastrow had other things on his mind. At noon an enormous white Lancia drew up outside, and Byron and Natalie heard the voices of Tom Searle and his wife. Celebrated American actors, they had been living for years in a hilltop villa not far from Jastrow's. Through them Jastrow had met and entertained Somerset Maugham, Bernard Berenson, and other celebrities. He often drove down to Florence with the Searles, and Natalie and Byron thought they might be fetching him now.

Coming down for lunch, however, they found A.J. alone in the

drawing room. He complained that they were late, which they were not, and uttered no further word until lunch was over.

"The Searles are moving back to the States," he said then. "They came to say good-by. They're worried about the war spreading, so they're abandoning their lease." Jastrow morosely fingered his beard. "That's one difference between leasing and buying. You just walk away without bothering about the place."

Byron said, "Well, sir, if you think there's any danger, your skin comes first."

"I have no such fears," he said peevishly. "We'll have our coffee in the lemon house."

The lemon house, a long, glassed-in structure full of small potted citrus trees, looked out on a grand panorama of the town and the rounded brown hills. The sunlight that poured in cheered Jastrow up. He said, "I predict they'll sneak back in short order with their tails between their legs. They remind me of the people who used to go fleeing off Martha's Vineyard at the first news of a hurricane. I sat through four hurricanes."

Natalie said after he left, "He's badly shaken."

"I hope he gets shaken loose from here."

They were sitting side by side on a white wicker couch. Byron started to put his arm around her. "Stop that," she said, catching her breath. "Briny, that's too simple. I'm twenty-seven. Are you twenty-five yet?"

"I'm old enough for you, Natalie."

"The question is, what are you doing with yourself? You're brave, you're gentle, but you just drifted here. You only stayed because of me. You're killing time and you're trained for nothing."

"How would you like to be married to a banker?" He told her about the relatives in Washington.

She beamed at him. "You're really facing up to life at last. Tell me—when did you decide you liked me?"

"That first day, when we came into the villa with Slote. You took off your sunglasses and I saw your eyes. That's when."

"It's absurd. Like everything else you say and do. You don't really *want* to be a banker. I'd better tell you what I think. The trouble is you *are* trained for something. You're a naval officer."

"I'm just a lowly reserve. That's nothing."

"If the war goes on, you'll be called up. You'll stay in from sheer inertia and family custom. But Byron, I'm not going to be the wife of a naval officer. I can't think of a worse existence."

"But I'll never be a naval officer— Why are you crying?"

She dashed the sudden tears from her face, smiling. "Oh, shut up. This is an insane conversation. All I know is that I'm crazy about you. No, not now, love, really, no—" She gasped the last words as he firmly took her in his arms.

There was nobody in sight outside the lemon house, and inside there was silence and the heavy sweet scent of blossoms. At last Natalie happened to glance up, and there stood Giuseppe outside the glass, leaning on his wheelbarrow, watching. With a squinting inebriated leer, he winked and trundled away.

"Well, there goes our little secret, sweetheart," Natalie said. "Smooching *under glass*! This whole thing is plain brute attraction between two people isolated together too long." She pulled at his hand. "Come on, we must get back."

As they came into the house, Jastrow called from his study, "Natalie, may I read your letter?"

"What letter, A.J.? I didn't get one today."

"Are you sure? I have one from your mother. She says she's written you a longer one. Come read this." He waved a flimsy airmail sheet as Byron went upstairs.

There were just a few lines of her mother's neat writing.

Dear Aaron:

We would both appreciate it if you would urge Natalie to come home. Louis took that story of her trip to Poland very hard. The doctor even thinks it may have caused this attack. I've written her all about it, so I won't repeat the whole terrible story. In retrospect, we were very lucky. Louis seems in no immediate danger.

We're wondering how long you intend to stay in Italy. Don't you feel it's dangerous? I know that you and Louis have been out of touch all these years, but still he does worry about you. You're his one brother.

Love,
Sophie and Louis

Natalie's letter arrived two days later. She took the long and somewhat frantic account of her father's heart attack to Jastrow. He said, "You had better go."

"Oh, I think so. I'm practically packed."

"What was Louis's trouble last time? Was it this bad?"

"No, not really. The problem was my announcement that I was in love with Leslie. He had breathing difficulty and a blackout episode. But he wasn't hospitalized that time."

Jastrow poked at the fire. "You won't come back. Life will get difficult here. Possibly I could go to New Mexico or Arizona. But they're such dull places! The thought of trying to write there!" He gave a deep sigh. "No doubt my books aren't that important. Still, the work is what keeps me going."

"Your books are important, A.J."

"Are they? Why?"

Natalie groped for an honest and precise answer. She said after a pause, "In a creditable, unsentimental way they are very Jewish in spirit. They've made me realize how very much Christendom owes this bizarre little folk we belong to."

Aaron Jastrow smiled tremulously. "Well, bless you. I fell in love with the grandeur of Christianity and of Jesus long ago—but it has made me no less Jewish. Nobody else in the family will accept that, your father least of all." He studied her face, and his eyes twinkled. "How long after you left would Byron remain? He gives me such a secure feeling, just by being here."

"Give him a raise—that'll hold him. He's never worked before."

"I have to watch my money now. We'll see. My strong impression is, actually, that you'll marry Leslie once you get back there. I'm sure if Byron knew that, he'd be more likely to stay—"

"Good God, Aaron! Do you expect me to tell Byron Henry I'm going to marry Slote, just to make him stay with you?"

"Why, my dear— Wait— My point is—" Jastrow looked after her, utterly astonished at her abrupt walkout.

"HOLY COW!" Byron said. "There's my father, or his double."

"Where?" said Natalie. Her flight was delayed, and they were drinking coffee in the Rome airport.

"Inside that ring of carabinieri over there." He pointed to a group of men leaving the terminal escorted by six deferential police officers. "Why didn't he tell me if he was coming to Italy?"

"Briny! If it is your father—I'm so tacky, and he's obviously busy. I'd rather meet him another time."

"Well, let me see if it's him. . . . *Dad!* Wait up!"

Victor Henry heard the voice just as the party reached the exit doors. He turned, waved, and asked his escort from the Foreign Ministry to wait for him outside. "Well, how about this?" he said, clasping Byron's hand.

"What's up, Dad? Couldn't you let me know?"

"It happened suddenly. I intended to ring you tonight. What are you doing in Rome?"

"Natalie's going home. Her father's sick."

"Oh? Has she left already?"

"No. She's sitting over there. The one with the big black hat."

Victor Henry caught a new proprietary note in his son's voice, noticed also the confident glance and a straighter back. "You're looking mighty bright-eyed and bushy-tailed," he said. "I'd like to meet that girl." He strode toward her so fast that Byron almost had to run to catch up. There was no stopping him.

"Natalie, this is Dad." With such a flat introduction these two people, the opposed poles in Byron's life, confronted each other.

Shaking hands with her, Victor Henry was taken by this girl with the dark eyes and face. She was not the adventuress he had built up in his imagination; she had an aura, a strong, calm feminine presence. He said, "I'm sorry to hear about your father."

She nodded her thanks. "I don't know how bad it is. But they want me at home, and so I'm going."

"Are you coming back?"

"I'm not sure. My uncle may be returning to the States too."

"He'd be well-advised to do that, fairly fast."

Pug was looking keenly at her, and she was meeting his glance. Soon she smiled a broad, wry, puckish smile, as though to say, All right, I don't blame you for trying to see what's there. How do you like it? This disconcerted Pug, who was seldom faced down in eye-to-eye confrontations. But now he shifted his glance.

The Winds of War

To ease the strain, Natalie said, "Byron tells me that you're friends of the Tudsbury's, Commander. I know Pamela."

"You do?" Pug managed a smile.

"Yes, we had mutual friends in Paris. She's lovely."

"I agree. Maniacal driver, though."

"Oh, I know. I once drove with her from Paris to Chartres and was scared senseless."

"I'd guess it would take more than that to scare you." Pug held out his hand. "I'm glad I've met you, Natalie." Awkwardly, he added, "It explains a lot. Good-by. Happy landings."

"Good-by, Commander Henry."

Pug abruptly walked off, with Byron at his elbow, accompanying him to the exit. "You, Briny, you're staying on in Siena?"

"For the time being."

"Do you know that Warren's engaged?"

"Oh, it's definite now?"

"Yes. They've set a date for May twentieth, after he finishes his carrier training. I hope you'll count on getting back by then. I'm working on a leave for myself."

"I'll certainly try. Any news of Madeline?"

"From Warren, yes. He took Janice to meet her. She gave them dinner at that apartment of hers with one of her show business boy friends. Warren assures me she's fine. But I can't take her being alone in New York."

Byron grinned. "Madeline's spirited and obstinate, but she's a good girl. She's not about to go off the deep end. How's Mom?"

"Off her feed. Berlin's beginning to get her down." They were at the exit. "How long will you be in Rome?"

"If I can see you, Dad, I'll stay on."

"Fine. Check in at the embassy with Captain Kirkwood. Could be we'll dine together tonight. By the way, that's some girl. You never said she was so pretty."

"What? I honestly don't think she is. I'm nuts about her, but—"

"She's got eyes you could drown in. However, what I wrote you long ago still goes. More so, now that I've seen her. She's a grown-up woman." He put his hand on Byron's shoulder. "No offense, but you have a way to go." Pug got into the waiting limousine.

Natalie's face was tense and inquiring when Byron got back. He fell into the chair beside her. "Gad, that was a shock."

"Do you know why he's here?" Byron shook his head. She said, "I didn't picture him that way. He looks almost genial. But when he talks he is scary."

"He fell for you."

"Byron, don't talk rot."

"He said something sappy about your eyes. Too embarrassing to tell you. Say, my brother's getting married in May. She's the daughter of a congressman. She doesn't seem as concerned as you about marrying a naval officer! Let's make it a double wedding."

"Why not? You'll be manager of a bank by then, no doubt."

They were both smiling, but the unsettled questions between them put an edge in their tones. It was a relief when her flight was announced. Byron carried her luggage into the crowd at the gate. "I love you, Natalie," he said.

"Oh, Briny, you know I love you."

Byron kissed her. "Cable if you're not coming back," he said, "and I'll take the next plane home."

"Yes, I'll cable."

"And promise that you'll make no other decisions, do nothing drastic, before you see me again."

"All right, it's a promise. Good-by, my darling. Good-by, Byron." Her voice rose as the press of passengers dragged her away.

AFTER a short, troubled sleep at his hotel, Commander Henry put on a freshly pressed uniform and walked to the embassy. In the rows of tables and chairs along the Via Veneto only a few people were braving the December chill. The gasoline shortage had almost emptied the broad boulevard of traffic.

Captain Kirkwood had left for the day. His yeoman handed Pug a long lumpy envelope. Two small objects fell out when he ripped it open: silver eagles on pins, the collar insignia of a captain.

Captain Kirkwood presents his compliments to *Captain* Henry, and trusts he is free to dine at nine, at the Osteria dell' Orso.

P.S.—You're out of uniform. Four stripes, please.

Clipped to the note was a strip of gold braid, and the AlNav letter listing newly selected captains.

The yeoman wore a wide grin. "Congratulations, Cap'n."

"Thank you. Did my son call?"

"Yes, sir. He's coming to dinner. I've got fresh coffee, sir, if you'd like a cup."

Sitting in the attaché's office, Pug drank one cup after another of the rich navy brew, feeling exalted and relieved. The big hurdle of the race for flag rank was early promotion to captain. He had been dreading that the selection board might pass him over. Execs of battleships and cruisers, squadron commanders of submarines and destroyers, insiders in BuShips and BuOrd could well crowd out an attaché. But the navy had treated him right. He wished he could share the news at once with his restless wife.

"Mr. Luigi Gianelli is here for you, sir." The yeoman's voice spoke through the squawk box.

"Very well." Pug put the tokens of his promotion into his pocket and went out to join the San Francisco banker, friend of Franklin Roosevelt, who was the reason for his journey to Rome.

The interior of the green Rolls-Royce smelled of cologne. Gianelli had the sleekness of secure wealth, and yet he seemed stimulated and slightly nervous. "I've already spoken to the foreign minister, Count Ciano," he said, lighting a long cigar. "I've known him well for many years. He's definitely coming to the reception, and from there will take me to the Palazzo di Venezia for the meeting with Mussolini. Now, what are your instructions?"

"To consider myself your aide as long as you're in Italy and Germany, sir." The second part of the banker's mission was an interview with Hitler, the occasion for which would be a party at Karinhall, Göring's estate outside Berlin.

Gianelli's drooping eyes were sizing up Victor Henry. "The President said there might be value in having you along to observe at both interviews, if these heads of state will stand for it. At Karinhall, of course, I can ask that you interpret for me. My German's a bit weak. Mussolini speaks English well, but naturally he'll prefer Italian. I think we'll have to feel our way. This whole errand is unusual, and there's no protocol for it."

Pug said, "This reception is being given for you?"

"Yes. My uncle is a banker here and the reception is at his town house. If, when we're there with Ciano, I touch my lapel so, you'll excuse yourself. Otherwise come along to the palazzo."

The arrangement proved needless because Mussolini himself dropped in on the party. About half an hour after the arrival of the Americans, a commotion started up at the door of the huge room and Il Duce walked bouncily in. Even the gorgeously uniformed Ciano seemed taken aback. Mussolini was a surprisingly short man, dressed in a wrinkled tweed jacket and dark trousers. He took a teacup and moved jauntily through the room, talking to one person and another. In this setting he hardly resembled the chin-jutting imperial bully. It seemed to Pug that here was a smart little fellow who had gotten himself into the saddle and loved it, but whose bellicosity was a comedy, unlike Hitler's.

Mussolini left the room while Pug was clumsily making talk with the banker's aunt. Seeing Gianelli beckon to him and walk off after Ciano, Pug excused himself and followed. The three men moved into a high-ceilinged library, where Mussolini with a regal gesture invited them to sit. Il Duce coldly stared at Victor Henry, then at Gianelli. The look changed Pug's impression of the Italian leader, and made him feel out of his depth and under suspicion.

Pug could half follow the banker's clear, measured Italian as he explained that Franklin Roosevelt, his treasured friend, had appointed the Berlin naval attaché as an aide for his few days in Europe; also that Henry would be his interpreter with Hitler. Mussolini's expression toward Pug warmed. "Do you speak Italian?" he said in good English.

"Excellency, I can follow it in a fashion. I can't speak it. But then, I have nothing to say."

Mussolini smiled. "If we come to naval matters maybe we will talk English. *Bene*, Luigi?"

The banker talked for about a quarter of an hour. He said that Mr. Roosevelt had sent him, a private citizen who knew Il Duce, to ask one question informally, so that a negative reply would not affect formal relations between the United States and Italy. The President was alarmed by the drift toward catastrophe in Europe.

Was it possible to do something, even at this late hour? Mr. Roosevelt had in mind a formal, urgent mission by a high United States diplomat, such as Sumner Welles, to visit all the chiefs of the warring states and explore the possible terms of a settlement. If Il Duce would join the President in bringing about such a settlement, he would hold a place in history as a savior of mankind.

Mussolini deliberated for a minute or so. Then he said that Italy's foreign policy rested on the Pact of Steel, the unshakable tie with Germany. Any maneuver designed to split this alliance would fail. No one would welcome a settlement in Europe more than he. But Hitler had offered a very reasonable one in October and the Allies had spurned it. The American government in recent years had been openly hostile to Germany and Italy. Mussolini said he took a pessimistic view of a mission by Sumner Welles.

"Now, Luigi," he concluded, "does this initiative come from President Roosevelt, or is he acting at the request of the Allies?"

"Duce, this is his own initiative."

Ciano cleared his throat and said, "Do the British and French know and approve of this visit?"

"No, Excellency. The President said that he would be making similar informal inquiries at this time in London and Paris."

"I have stated my deep reservations," said Mussolini. "But I share Mr. Roosevelt's sentiment about leaving no stone unturned." He took a long portentous pause. "If the President sends Sumner Welles on such a mission, I will receive him."

Gianelli's fixed smile gave way to a real one of delight and pride. He gushed over Mussolini's greatness, and the flood of flattery was tolerated with seeming enjoyment. Then Mussolini rose and led Gianelli out through French doors to the balcony.

Ciano smoothed his thick black hair. "Well, Commander, what do you think of the great German victory in the South Atlantic?"

"I hadn't heard of one."

"Really? The battleship *Graf Spee* has caught a group of British cruisers and destroyers off Montevideo, sunk four or five, and damaged all the rest. It's a British disaster that changes the whole balance of force in the Atlantic."

Victor Henry was shocked. "What happened to *Graf Spee*?"

"Minor hits that will be repaired overnight."

Pug was skeptical. "The British have acknowledged this?"

Count Ciano smiled. "No, but the British took a while to acknowledge the sinking of the *Royal Oak*."

THE dinner celebrating Victor Henry's promotion began in gloom while the two attachés, waiting for Byron, discussed the *Graf Spee* news. Captain Kirkwood believed the story. He asserted that since the last war a deep rot had eaten out the heart and will of England, and the Limey navy was now a shell.

"Hi, Dad." Byron's sports jacket and slacks were decidedly out of place in a restaurant where half the people wore evening dress.

Pug introduced him. "Where have you been? You're late."

"I saw a movie, and then sacked out at the YMCA for a while."

"Is that all you could find to do in Rome? See a movie?"

"Well, see, I was tired." Byron appeared his old slack self.

The waiter now brought champagne, and Kirkwood proposed a toast to *Captain Victor Henry*.

"Hey, Dad! Four stripes! Really?" Radiating surprised joy, Byron lifted his glass. "Doesn't this put you way out front?"

Captain Kirkwood said, "He's been out front all along. That's what this means."

"All it takes now is one false move," said Pug dryly. "You're never out front till you retire."

"What's your situation, Byron?" Kirkwood said.

"He's ROTC," Pug quickly said. "He's got a yen for submarines. By the way, Briny, the New London sub school is doubling the enrollment in May."

Kirkwood smiled. "Now's the time to get in on the ground floor, Byron. How're your eyes? Twenty-twenty?"

"My eyes are okay, but I have a job here."

Pug said, "He's working for a famous author, Aaron Jastrow, in Siena. You know, the one who wrote *A Jew's Jesus*."

"Oh, yes. I had lunch with him at the embassy not long ago. Brilliant fellow. Having trouble getting back home, isn't he?"

Byron said, "Not trouble, sir, he just doesn't want to leave."

"Are you sure? Seems to me that's why he was in Rome. There's

a foul-up in his papers. I guess it can be worked out, and he ought to make tracks. Those Nazis are just over the Alps."

Victor Henry was returning to Berlin that night by train, accompanying Gianelli. After dinner Byron rode to the station with him in a prolonged silence. Natalie Jastrow was a heavy, invisible presence in the cab. "Briny," Pug said finally, "if the British really took that shellacking, we won't stay out much longer. We can't let the Germans close the Atlantic. Why don't you put in for sub school? By May, Jastrow'll be back in the States, surely?"

"May's a long way off."

"Well, I'm not going to argue," Pug got out of the cab. "Good-by. Don't miss Warren's wedding."

"I'll try not to. Good-by, Dad. I'm so proud you made captain."

16

SO IRASCIBLY did Rhoda greet her husband on his return that he began to think something might really be wrong with her. Why, she demanded, hadn't she been invited to the Görings' party at Karin hall? In his absence the invitation, addressed just to him, had been delivered by a Luftwaffe staff officer. If he left her behind, she could never face anybody in Berlin again.

Pug could not disclose that he was going for secret state reasons, as a flunky to an international financier. He couldn't even take her into the snow-covered garden to soothe her with hints of this; it was almost midnight, and she was wearing a cloudy blue negligee, in which, indeed, she looked very pretty.

"Rhoda, you must take my word that it's a security thing."

"Ha. Security! That old chestnut!"

Pug had been glancing through piled-up mail. "Hullo. Here's a letter from that Kirby fellow. What's he got to say?"

"Read it. It's as dull as he is. All about how glad he is to be home, and how good the skiing is around Denver. Honestly, you're a riot, Pug. Whenever you come home you go straight for the mail. What are you expecting, a letter from a lost love?"

He laughed and shoved the letters aside. "Right you are. Let's have a drink. You look wonderful."

"I do not. The damned hairdresser baked my hair into shredded wheat again. I'm going to bed. Nothing to talk about, since Karin-hall is out. I even bought a sensational dress. I'll send it back."

"Keep it. You might just find a use for it."

"Oh? Expect to be invited to the Görings' again?" She went out without staying for an answer.

Pug prepared a couple of highballs to toast the news of his promotion, which he'd been saving to give her. When he got upstairs, her light was out—an old unpleasant marital signal. He drank both highballs himself and slept in the library.

The next day was brightened for him by the German announcement that the *Graf Spee* had heroically scuttled itself after its historic victory, and that its captain had then nobly shot himself in a hotel room in Montevideo. Pug heard over the BBC that three much lighter British vessels had in fact beaten the German warship in a running sea fight and sent it limping into the neutral port.

Also, when Rhoda learned of Pug's promotion, she shed her blues and proceeded to give him the honeymoon treatment. His account of Natalie Jastrow fascinated and appalled her. "Let's hope she'll come to her senses and drop Briny," she said.

KARINHALL looked like a penitentiary built in the style of a hunting lodge. It sat in a game preserve about two hours' drive from Berlin, behind heavy electrically controlled gates, steel fences, and a gauntlet of machine-gun-bearing Luftwaffe sentinels.

In the vaulted banquet room, amid a dazzling crush of uniformed Nazis and their brilliantly gowned women, Adolf Hitler was playing with Göring's little girl. The guests were cooing and clapping hands as their leader in his plain field-gray coat held the beautiful white-clad child in his arms and teased her with a cake. Göring and his statuesque wife, both ablaze in operatic finery, stood near, beaming with pride. Suddenly the little girl kissed the Führer on his big pale nose, and he laughed and gave her the cake. A cheer went up and women wiped their eyes.

"The Führer loves children," said the Luftwaffe officer accompanying the two Americans. "Ach, if he could only marry!"

The Görings escorted Hitler to the long buffet table, and this

signaled a general swarming toward the food. Liveried lackeys set up gilt tables and chairs and helped the guests to food and wine. Guided by the Luftwaffe officer, Pug and Gianelli landed at a table with a banker named Wolf Stöller, a slight man in his fifties who hailed the American financier as an old acquaintance.

Pug knew that Stöller's bank was the chief conduit by which Göring was amassing his riches. His specialty was acquiring *Objekte*, the term for Jewish-owned companies forced to the wall by restrictive codes of law. Stöller's technique was to find and unite all the buyers interested in an *Objekt*, and to make a single very low offer. The owners had the choice of taking it or going bankrupt. Stöller's group then divided up the firm. The big prizes—metal, banking, textiles—Göring bought up himself.

Clever and cordial, Stöller spoke fine English and made bright jokes. He expressed deep regard for the United States and melancholy regret that its relations with Germany were not better. Could he not do something to improve them, he said, by inviting Gianelli and the Henrys for a weekend at his estate, Abendruh? Stöller's ash-blond wife, touching Pug's hand with her jeweled fingers, crinkled her blue eyes at him in invitation.

Gianelli declined; he had to leave in the morning. Victor Henry had no stomach for Stöller, but it was part of his job to penetrate among influential Germans and it might amuse Rhoda. He said he would come. The look the Stöllers then exchanged convinced him that they were not cultivating him just casually.

Stöller took the two Americans on a tour of Göring's vast, flamboyant mansion, but before they had gone far, the Luftwaffe officer caught up with them and whispered to the German banker.

"Ah, what a pity. Now you must go to your meeting," said Stöller. "Captain Henry, my office will telephone you tomorrow about the weekend." He accompanied the Americans to a room hung with antlers, stuffed animal heads, and hides. On a settee beside a roaring fire lolled Göring, one thick white-booted leg off the floor, sipping coffee from a gold demitasse. Across from him sat Ribbentrop. Hitler was not in the room.

Göring nodded familiarly at Gianelli. Stöller introduced Victor Henry, backed out of the room, and closed the door. Ribbentrop

stared at the ceiling. "You will have seven minutes of the Führer's time to state your business," he said in German.

Gianelli stammered, "Excellency, permit me to reply in English. I am here in a private capacity, and I regard that much time as an extraordinary courtesy to my country and my President."

Ribbentrop's face remained blank, so Pug translated. The foreign minister snapped in an Oxford accent, "I understand English."

Göring motioned the Americans to chairs. "You are welcome to Karinhall, Luigi," he said. "I have tried to invite you more than once. But you have come a long way for a short interview."

"May I say, Field Marshal," Gianelli answered, "that world peace is worth any effort."

Ribbentrop burst out in German, "This peculiar visitation is another studied insult by your President to the German head of state. Whoever heard of sending a private citizen as an emissary in such matters? Between civilized countries the diplomatic structure is used. Germany did not withdraw its ambassador from Washington by choice. The United States first made the hostile gesture. The United States has allowed a campaign of hate against the German people. And it has revised its so-called Neutrality Act in blatant favor of the aggressors in this conflict, England and France."

Clearly shaken, Gianelli looked at Victor Henry, who translated the foreign minister's tirade. Göring said in a milder but no more friendly tone, "What is your purpose here, Luigi?"

"Field Marshal, I am an informal messenger from my President to your Führer, and I have a single question to put to him that could have lasting historical results."

"What is the question?" Göring said.

The banker's face was going yellow. "Field Marshal, by my President's order, the question is for the Führer." He turned to Victor Henry. "Captain, I beg you to verify my instructions."

Pug confirmed Gianelli's instructions and mentioned the successful interview with Il Duce in Italy.

"We know all that," Ribbentrop said. "We know the question, too." In the silence that followed, Hitler came into the room.

Göring and Ribbentrop rose as quickly as the Americans, assuming very much the lackey look. Göring moved from the settee

to a chair, and Hitler took his place. He gave the Americans a grave glance.

"Luigi Gianelli, American banker. Captain Victor Henry, United States naval attaché in Berlin," said Ribbentrop, in a sarcastic tone emphasizing the unimportance of the visitors.

The banker cleared his throat, attempted an expression of gratitude in German for the interview, then shifted to English. With the same prologue on world peace that he had addressed to Mussolini, he put to the Führer the question about Sumner Welles.

A bitter little smile moved Hitler's mustache, and he began to speak in quiet, clear, Bavarian-accented German. "Your esteemed President, Herr Gianelli, seems to feel a remarkable sense of responsibility for the course of world history. It is all the more strange in that the United States not only failed to join the League of Nations but has repeatedly indicated that she wants no foreign entanglements." German political aims were simple, Hitler went on. Five centuries before Columbus discovered America, there had been a German empire at the heart of Europe. Over and over again, other powers had attempted to fragment the German folk, but each time the German nation had rallied and thrown off these foreign yokes. The Versailles Treaty had been the latest such effort; because it had been historically unsound and unjust, it was dead. The restoration of normal Germany was now complete.

Victor Henry, translating, was deeply struck by Hitler's steady manner, by his apparent moral conviction, and by his identification of himself with the German nation—"and so I restored the Rhineland to the Reich . . . I brought back Austria to its historical origins"—and by his broad visions of history. He radiated the personal force that Pug had seen in only two or three admirals.

"I share the President's desire for peace," Hitler was saying, gesturing now. "I hunger for peace. I know war. I was born to create, not to destroy. But the British and French leaders call for the destruction of 'Hitlerism'"—he brought out the foreign term with contempt—"as their price for peace. This attitude, if persisted in, will doom Europe, because I and the German people are one." His voice began to rise. "How can the English and French be so blind to realities? I achieved air parity in 1935. Since then I have

never stopped building planes, planes, *planes*, U-boats, U-boats, *U-boats*, tanks, tanks, *tanks!*" He was screaming now, and sweeping both fists down again and again to strike the floor, bending far over so that the famous black lock of hair tumbled in his face. Then, suddenly, dramatically, his voice dropped. "Let the test of fire come. I have done my utmost, and my conscience is clear before the bar of history."

Hitler fell silent, then stood with an air of dismissal, his eyes burning and distant. Göring lumbered to his feet. "*Mein Führer*, after this wonderfully clear presentation of the realities, you offer no objection to this visit of Herr Sumner Welles, I take it."

Hitler gave an impatient shrug. "I have no wish to return his discourtesy. But until the British will to destroy me is itself destroyed, the only road to peace is through German victory. Anything else is irrelevant." He strode out through the door.

Göring said to Gianelli, "President Roosevelt has his reply. The Führer will not reject the Welles mission."

"I understood him to call the mission irrelevant," said Ribbentrop, in a strained voice.

"If you want to press the Führer for clarification," Göring said skeptically to him, "go ahead. I think I know him." He turned to the banker. "Tell your President that I said the Führer will not refuse to receive Welles, but sees no hope in it unless the British and the French drop their war aim of removing the Führer. If they persist in that, the result will be a frightful battle, ending in total German victory after the death of millions."

"That will be the result in any case. The die will be cast before Mr. Sumner Welles can pack his papers," said Ribbentrop.

With a total change to geniality, Göring took each of the two Americans by an elbow. "I hope you are not leaving so soon?"

"I regret that my plane will not wait," Gianelli replied.

"Then you must come again. I will walk out with you."

The foreign minister stood looking at the fire. When Gianelli hesitantly spoke a word of farewell, Ribbentrop merely grunted.

Arm in arm with Göring, the Americans walked down the corridors of Karinhall. The air minister chatted about the U-boat program and the Luftwaffe; he hoped their President was aware of

Germany's industrial strength. By the time they reached the front doors, Gianelli had recovered enough to say, "Excellency, I will have to tell the President that your foreign minister does not welcome the Welles mission and has stated the Führer does not."

Göring's face toughened. "If Welles comes, the Führer will see him. That is official. Remember this. Germany is like all countries. Not everybody here wants peace. But I do."

Victor Henry sat up most of the night composing his report to the President. After an account of the facts, he wrote:

None of the three men seemed to treat the interview very seriously. I would guess that Göring wanted it to take place, and that Hitler didn't mind. I got the feeling that he enjoyed sounding off to a pair of Americans who would report directly to you. And I believe Ribbentrop was doing his dirty work for him, expressing what he really feels. I don't think any of them give a damn whether Welles comes or not, though I think Hitler would receive him. All three acted as though the offensive in the west is ready to roll. If the British are as set on their terms as Hitler is on his, you'll have all-out war in the spring.

RHODA hugged and kissed Pug when he told her about their weekend invitation. He didn't mention his uneasy feelings about Stöller. There was no point in making Rhoda share them.

The chauffeur sent by Stöller drove past the colonnaded front entrance to Abendruh and dropped them at a back door, where a maid conducted them up some narrow servants' stairs. Pug wondered whether this were a calculated German insult. But they were given a spacious, richly furnished bedroom and sitting room; and the mystery of the back stairs cleared up when they went to dinner. The curving main staircase, balustraded in red marble, had been entirely covered with a polished wooden slide. Down below, the Stöllers and their guests stood watching an elegant couple in dinner clothes sliding down, the woman hysterical with laughter as her green silk dress pulled up over her legs.

"Oh my gawd, Pug, I'll DIE!" chortled Rhoda. "I can't POSSIBLY!" But of course she made the slide, screaming with embarrassed



delight, exposing her shapely legs clear up to her lacy underwear. She arrived at the bottom scarlet-faced, amid cheers and congratulations, to be welcomed by the hosts and introduced to fellow weekenders. It was a sure icebreaker, Pug thought, if gross.

Next morning when he woke, he found a green leather hunting costume laid out for him, complete with feathered hat, belt, and dagger. The men were a varied crowd: Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht officers, other bankers, the president of an electrical works, a prominent actor. Pug was the only foreigner. They took him warmly into their group, but deer hunting had never appealed to Pug. He lagged behind with General Armin von Roon, who remarked that to see a deer shot made him feel ill.

Von Roon was more loquacious than he had been when Pug had met him before. He discussed the Polish campaign, the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, even Hitler, with extraordinary candor. He scarcely veiled his contempt for the Nazi Party, but he made out a strong case for Hitler as a German leader. Just then shots rang out and they joined the rest of the party, which was ringed around a small deer lying dead in blood-spattered snow. Pug became separated from the general and, looking for him before dinner, learned that he had been summoned back to Berlin.

After dinner, a string quartet played Beethoven and a fat soprano sang Schubert songs. Rhoda felt in her element, and when dancing followed, she had one German partner after another. At last Stöller took Pug to a library, where the actor and Dr. Knopfmann, the head of the electrical works, sat over brandy. Now, Pug guessed, would come the sort of planned conversation he was getting used to expecting.

"Ah, here is Captain Henry," said the actor, in a rich ringing voice. "What better authority do you want? Let's ask him."

"No war talk this weekend," said Stöller.

"I don't mind," Pug said, accepting brandy and settling in a leather chair. "What's the question?"

Dr. Knopfmann said, "I maintain that the Americans will accept the *fait accompli* once England is defeated. When Europe is normalized, we can have a hundred years of peace."

"First you have to lick England," Pug said.

The actor said, "Oh, I think we can assume that's in the cards—providing the Americans don't step in."

Stöller said, "Your President doesn't try to hide his British sympathies, Victor. But wouldn't you say the people are against him?"

"Yes, but remember that American opinion can shift fast."

The eyes of the Germans flickered at each other. Dr. Knopfmann said, "A shift in public opinion must be manufactured."

"There's the live nerve," Stöller said. "It's where the vast power of the American Jews is such a vital factor in the war picture."

"You fellows kid yourselves in exaggerating that," Pug said.

"My dear Victor, I've been in the United States." He proceeded to reel off a list of Jewish officials in Washington, and he made the usual Nazi assertion that the Jews had American finance, communications, justice, and even the presidency in their pockets.

Wearily, Pug gave his stock answers to stock anti-Semitism: the all but solid Christian ownership of banks, industry, newspapers, and publishing houses; the predominantly Christian composition of Congress, the Cabinet, the Executive branch, the Supreme Court, and all the rest. On his hearers' faces appeared the superior smirk of Germans when discussing Jews. Stöller said, "That's always the Jewish line, how unimportant they are."

"Would you recommend that we take away what businesses they do have? Make *Objekte* of them?"

Stöller laughed. "You're well informed, Victor. It would be an excellent idea for the health of your economy."

"Is it your position," the actor said, "that the Jewish question really has no bearing on America's entry into the war?"

"No. Americans do react sharply to injustice and suffering."

The smirk reappeared on the three faces, and Stöller said, "Victor speaks very diplomatically, but his connections are okay. Congressman Lacouture of Florida is practically in his family. He fought a great battle against revising the Neutrality Act."

This caught Pug off guard, but he said calmly, "You're well informed, too. Our connection's not exactly public knowledge."

Stöller laughed. "The air minister told me. He admires Lacouture. Ach, how did it get to be half past one? There's a little supper on, gentlemen. How about an omelet and some champagne?"

ON CHRISTMAS EVE, Victor Henry left the embassy early to walk home, feeling the need of air and exercise. Berlin was having a lugubrious yuletide. The shopwindows offered colorful displays, but very little was for sale. As Pug walked, evening fell and the blackout began. Hearing muffled Christmas songs from behind curtained windows, he could picture the Berliners sitting in dimly lit apartments in their overcoats around tinsel-draped fir trees, trying to make merry on watery beer and salt mackerel. At Abendruh, the Henrys had almost forgotten about war shortages.

Suddenly, out of the darkness a figure approached.

"Captain Henry? I'm Rosenthal, the owner of your house."

"Oh, yes. Hello." Shaking hands in the glow of a blue streetlight, Pug saw that the Jew had lost a shocking lot of weight. His confident bearing had given way to a whipped and sickly look.

"Forgive me. My wife and I are to be sent to Poland soon. We can't take our things, so perhaps you and Mrs. Henry would care to buy something—at a very reasonable price."

Pug had heard of the "resettlement" of the Berlin Jews in newly formed Polish ghettos. "You have a factory here," he said, disturbed. "Can't your people keep an eye on your things for you?"

"The fact is I've sold my firm. . . ."

"Did you sell out to the Stöller bank?"

The Jew's face showed astonishment. "You know about these matters? Yes, the Stöller bank. I received a fair price." He permitted himself a single ironic glance into Henry's eyes. "But the proceeds were tied up to settle other affairs. My wife and I will be more comfortable in Poland with a little ready money. So—perhaps the carpets, the plate, or some china?"

"Herr Rosenthal, I repeat that I don't want to take advantage of your misfortune."

"Captain Henry, you can't possibly do me and my wife a greater kindness than to buy something." He put a card in Pug's hand and melted into the blackout.

THE NEXT pouch of navy mail contained an AINav listing changes of duty for most of the new captains. They were becoming execs of battleships, commanding officers of cruisers, chiefs of

staff to admirals at sea. For Pug there were no orders. He stared out the window—at Hitler's chancellery, at the black-clad SS men letting snow pile on their helmets and shoulders like statues. Suddenly he had had enough. He told his yeoman not to disturb him, and in a long letter to Vice-Admiral Preble he poured out his disgust with his present assignment and his desire to go back to sea.

A few days later another White House envelope came with a thickly penciled scrawl. It must have crossed his letter:

Pug—

Your report is really grand, and gives me a helpful picture. Hitler is a strange one, isn't he? Everybody's reaction is a little different. I'm delighted that you are where you are, and I have told CNO that. He says you want to come back in May for a wedding. That will be arranged. Be sure to drop in on me when you can spare a moment.

FDR

Resigned to his stay in Berlin, Victor Henry bought two of Rosenthal's oriental carpets and a set of English china that Rhoda particularly loved, at the prices the man named. It seemed to Pug that the moral gap between him and Stöller had narrowed. Notwithstanding Rosenthal's pathetic gratitude for the deal, his possessions were *Objekte*.

17

1316 Normandie Drive, Miami Beach
New Year's Day

Briny dear—

I can't think of a better way to start 1940 than by writing to you. I'm home, typing away in my old bedroom, which seems one-tenth as large as I remembered it. Oh, my love, I had forgotten what a marvelous place the United States is!

When I reached New York my father was already out of the hospital—I learned this by phoning home—so I blew two hundred dollars on a 1934 Dodge coupe, and I *drove* to Florida to get the feel of the country again. I found my father coming along fine after

his heart attack, but I don't like his fragile look. He goes on and on with worry about Uncle Aaron, and he's terrified of Hitler.

I drove down via Washington and saw Slote. When I told him I'd fallen head over ears in love with you, he actually tottered to a chair and fell in it, pale as a ghost. A conversation ensued that went on for hours, in a bar, in my car, in half a dozen circuits on foot around the Lincoln Memorial in a freezing wind, and finally in his apartment. He kept making the same points: that it was a temporary physical infatuation, and there couldn't be anything substantial between us; that I was an intellectual woman and you just a charming boy, etc., etc. He insisted that he and I would get married once I was over this nuttiness.

Maybe he's right about me and you. I choose not to look beyond the present moment. I'm still overwhelmed, I still love you, I still long for you. I've never been so happy in all my life.

You were absolutely right that Aaron should leave that stupid house and live out his days in this wonderful land. His staying is imbecilic, and let's try to convince him of it. But don't just abandon him, sweetheart. Not yet. Wait till my plans jell a bit.

I adore you.

Natalie

Three letters from Byron came straggling in during the following few weeks. The first two were artless scribblings: "I'm the world's worst letter writer . . . I sure miss you more than I can say . . ." Then came a better one, replying to hers of January 1.

Natalie darling:

You don't have to tell me how good the United States is, compared with Europe. I'm so homesick at this point, I could die. This is quite aside from my yearning for you, which is how iron filings must feel around a magnet. Sometimes when I'm sitting here in my room thinking about you, the pull gets so strong, I feel if I let go of the arms of my chair I'd float out of the window and across the Atlantic straight to you.

Slote only *thinks* he's going to marry you. He had his chance.

By the way, I'm more than one-third through Slote's list of tomes about the Germans, and I'm getting the picture. All of these writers come out with the same scary sureness which you also see in pres-

ent-day Germany—that the Germans have been gypped for centuries and that the world's got to be made over on their terms.

Getting A.J. out of here seems to be a bit of a project, after all. There was a minor technical foul-up in his naturalization, way back, that he never bothered to correct. And according to him the new consul general in Rome is creating difficulties. All this will straighten out, of course—they've said as much in Rome—but it's taking time.

So I won't abandon A.J. now, but I must come home by mid-April. Aside from my brother's wedding, my father's gotten me unofficially admitted to submarine school, where the next officer course starts May 27. However, I'll only enroll if the war breaks wide open.

A.J. and I still have our coffee in the lemon house. I smell the blossoms and close my eyes and there you are, for a moment. Natalie, there has to be a God or I wouldn't have found you, and He has to be the same God for both of us. There's only one God.

I love you.

Briny

"Well, well," Natalie said aloud, as her tears dropped on the flimsy airmail paper. "You miserable chestnut-haired devil." She looked at the date: February 10! This was April 9—two months for an airmail letter! He might be on his way back by now.

Just then a news broadcast came drifting through her open window from the garden where her father was sitting. The announcer's dramatic tones caught her attention:

"The 'phony war' has ended. Nazi Germany has invaded neutral Norway by sea and air, and German land forces have rolled into Denmark. Fierce resistance is reported by the Norwegian government at Oslo, Narvik, Trondheim, and other key points along the coast. The British navy is moving rapidly to cut off the invasion. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, declared this morning, 'All German vessels entering the Skagerrak will be sunk. . . .'"

Going outside, Natalie was surprised to find that her father had fallen asleep, though the radio was still blaring. She touched his shoulder. "Pa?" He did not respond. "Pa!" As she shook him his

head lolled. She thrust her hand inside his shirt; there was no heartbeat. In the instant before she shrieked and ran in to call the doctor, she saw on her dead father's face a resemblance to Aaron Jastrow that in his lifetime she had never observed.

Natalie was prostrated by her father's death. He had loved her and spoiled her, and she, a brash intellectual snob, had despised and neglected him, because he was just a businessman, a sweater manufacturer. Now that he was unreachable by love or regret, she could not eat or sleep. Her mother, a conventional woman who was baffled by her daughter, pulled out of her own grief and tried to comfort her, but Natalie would just lie on her bed and wail.

The radio news—disaster on disaster in Norway, German drives succeeding, Allied landings failing—came to her as dim distant rumors. Reality was only her wet pillow.

She was shocked back to her senses by two events, one on top of the other: Byron's return from Europe, and the German attack on France.

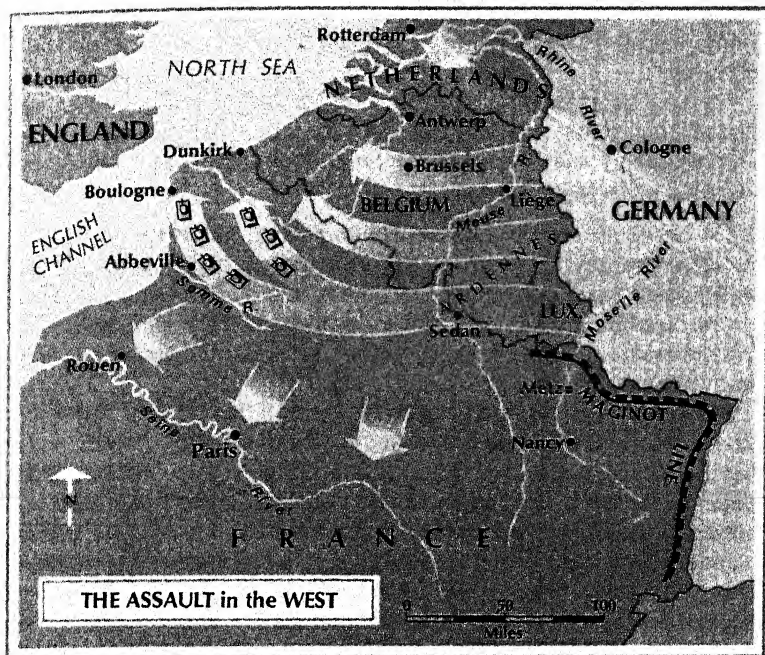
18

The Assault in the West From "World Empire Lost"

Modern war is characterized by sudden swift changes on the grand scale. In the spring of 1940, seven days sufficed for our German armed forces to upset the world order. On May 10, the English and French were still the victors of Versailles, masters of the seas and continents. By May 17 France was a beaten nation, and England was hanging on for her life.

The world was stunned. For months western newspapers had been printing maps showing imaginary battle lines for the coming campaign. The French commander in chief, Maurice Gamelin, "the world's foremost professional soldier," as the journalists called him, was said to have a masterly plan to beat us.

France had constructed, in peacetime, a great wall of fortresses linked by underground tunnels, the Maginot Line. Beginning at the Swiss Alps, it ran along the French-German frontier for more than a hundred miles to the Belgian border. But there it stopped. Between there and the English Channel remained a hole of open, level country



at least as long as the line itself. In 1914 we bestial Germans had attacked through Belgium, precisely because it offered such a flat, fine road to Paris. Couldn't we just go around the famous Maginot Line and come down by that route again?

The proponents of the Gamelin plan met such questions with ironic smiles. If war came, they said, the French and British armies would be poised along the unfortified Belgian border, ready to leap forward and join the tough Belgian army of two hundred thousand men on a strong river line. With the enormous advantage which modern firepower gave the defense over the offense, a German attack on such a narrow front would bloodily collapse.

We did attack, though not exactly where the plan called for us to do so. Five days later we were pouring around the north end of the Maginot Line through the supposedly "impassable" Ardennes country and flooding westward across France. We thus cut off the French and British armies in Belgium. On the morning of May 15, Paul Reynaud, the

Prime Minister of France, telephoned his defense minister to ask what countermeasures Gamelin was proposing. The minister answered, "He has none."

France, Germany's implacable enemy of the centuries, had at last passed from the stage of historical greatness, having wasted her national energy and treasure on an enormous tragic joke in steel and concrete: half a wall.

In the headquarters of our Supreme Command, however, even at this moment of victory, there was worry. We were torn between pride in this virile German reversal of the 1918 defeat, and our knowledge of tragic errors in military leadership the inexperienced Führer had made or tried to make. Our hope was that he would steady down for the great assault in the west.

Six days after the breakthrough, however, when General von Rundstedt was rolling to the sea with Guderian's panzers in the van, Hitler had a bad fit of nerves and halted the army for two precious days. Guderian wangled permission for a "reconnaissance" westward and blitzed ahead to the coast. But then followed an incredible tactical blunder. With the British Expeditionary Force helplessly retreating toward the sea and about to be cut off, the Führer halted Guderian's tank divisions nine miles from Dunkirk for three days! The British rescued their armies from the Dunkirk beaches, and the first golden chance for quick victory in World War II slipped from our grasp.

Worse, and more amazing, was the fact that the Wehrmacht arrived at the English Channel without any plan of what to do next! There we were, millions strong, flushed with victory, facing an impotent enemy across a ditch forty miles wide. It was a moment for generalship such as comes once in a thousand years. Yet our infallible leader failed to take it because he had overlooked the slight detail of how one got to England.

The British, despite fierce Luftwaffe bombardment, had moved three hundred thousand men across the Channel in a scraped-together flotilla of cockleshells. Why then could not we do a Dunkirk in reverse, using every available vessel in western and northern Europe? We would have been across the water before the British fleet could mass to counterattack. The aerial battle of Britain would have been fought over the Channel under conditions favorable to the Luftwaffe. And with the British Expeditionary Force now a disarmed rabble, there would have been nothing on the ground to oppose our march to London.

Translator's note: My friends in the Royal Navy would stoutly deny that even in June the Germans could have made it across the Channel. It is a moot point, but in my judgment von Roon makes out a fair case. He is on weaker ground in blaming Hitler for the lack of staff plans for an invasion. Apparently the German General Staff had none, either.

—V.H.

19

BIG GERMAN BREAKTHROUGH!

STILL NOT OUR FIGHT, DECLARES LACOUTURE

MADELINE had been helping Janice Lacouture shop for her trousseau in New York. Passing a newsstand at the corner of Madeline's apartment building, Janice said, "Oh, gawd, there's Daddy again, sounding off. Won't your folks be impressed!" Rhoda, Pug, and Byron were due at three o'clock in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, aboard the cruiser *Helena*. Janice's first encounter with Warren's mother was much on her mind.

Jonquils and irises in a bowl on the dining table touched the apartment with spring as the two girls walked in. Madeline had decorated the place with cream-and-green flowered draperies and modern teak furniture that made it seem light and roomy. She dropped her armload of packages and called her answering service, briskly jotting notes on a pad.

"Rats," she said to Janice. "I can't go with you to meet the family. Two of the amateurs have loused out. I have to spend the afternoon listening to replacements." She glanced at the pad. "Do you happen to know a man named Palmer Kirby? He's at the Waldorf and he says he's a friend of the family." Janice shook her head.

Madeline rang him and liked his voice. "Your family was very hospitable to me in Berlin," he told her. "Your mother wrote me they'd be arriving in New York today, and told me to contact them through you. I'd like to take all of you to dinner."

"That's kind of you, but I don't know their plans."

"Well, suppose I make reservations here? If you can come, I'll expect you at six. If not, just give me a ring, or your mother can."

"Thank you, Mr. Kirby. Warren's fiancée is with us, too."

"Excellent. By all means bring her."

Off Madeline went, brimming with zest for existence. She was now "program coordinator" of *The Amateur Hour*; Hugh Cleveland had recently stepped in as its master of ceremonies. She remained Cleveland's assistant for his morning show too. For Madeline, May 1940 was as jolly a month as she had ever lived.

JANICE found the cruiser was already tied up at the pier in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. War refugees were streaming off the gangway into a swarm of waving, shouting relatives. Janice made her way to the customs shed.

Rhoda was waiting by a heap of luggage, and the tall young blonde in the green wool suit caught her eye. "Well, isn't this Janice?" she said, stepping forward. "The snapshots didn't do you justice at ALL. I'm Rhoda Henry."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Henry! Hello!" Rhoda's elegance contrasted strongly with the impression Janice had had of Warren's father in Pensacola as a coarse-grained weather-beaten man. Quickly she explained why Madeline hadn't come.

"Well! Hasn't she turned into the little career girl! My dear, how ravishing you are. Lucky Warren! How is he, anyway?"

"All right, I hope. He's sweating out carrier landings down off Puerto Rico somewhere."

Victor Henry, looking more impressive than Janice remembered, in a gold-buttoned blue bridge coat and gold-encrusted cap, came up to them. After a greeting to Janice and an inquiry about Madeline, he wanted to know where Byron had gotten off to.

"Byron went to make a phone call," Rhoda said.

Janice told the Henrys about Palmer Kirby's invitation. "Well, of all things," Rhoda said. "His factory's in Denver. What's he doing here? Of course dinner at the Waldorf would be lovely, take the taste of Berlin out of our mouths! Janice, Germany's just gruesome. When I saw the Statue of Liberty, I laughed and cried."

"Matter of fact, I have to talk to Kirby," Pug said.

Byron appeared through the crowd. "Hey, Janice?" he said, shaking her hand. "I'm Warren's brother. I hoped you'd be here." He gave her a small box with a London label.

Janice opened it, and there lay a Victorian pin, a little golden elephant with red stones for eyes. "Good heavens!" she said.

"Anybody who marries one of us needs the patience of an elephant," said Byron. "I'm flying to Miami early this evening to see someone I hope will be another member of the family."

Janice kissed him and said, "That must be some girl in Miami. Bring her to the wedding with you. Don't forget."

"I HAVE nothing to offer," said the grainy, strong singsong voice, slurring the consonants, "but blood, toil, tears, and sweat. . . ."

"Why, he's a genius!" Rhoda said. Champagne glasses in hand, she, Pug, Janice, and Kirby were listening to the radio.

"You ask, what is our policy? I will say, it is to wage war, by sea, land, and air, with all our might and all the strength that God can give us: to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror. . . ."

When the speech ended, the announcer said, "You have just heard the newly appointed Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill."

Victor Henry said to Dr. Kirby, "Quite a speech. Can we talk for a few minutes?"

Kirby got to his feet, and Rhoda smiled at him. "Champagne, caviar, and business as usual. That's Pug."

"We're just waiting for Madeline," Pug said.

"Come along," Kirby said, leading Pug into the bedroom and closing the door. He sat down at a desk and began checking off a stack of journals and reports that he had asked Pug to bring him from Germany.

Pug said, "Palmer, are you working on a uranium bomb?"

Kirby turned and looked into Pug's eyes. The silence and the steady look between the men lasted a long time.

"All that stuff zeroes in on the uranium business," Pug said, sitting down on the bed. "And some of the things I couldn't get, like the graphite figures, the Germans told me were classified because of the secret bomb aspects. They talk so loosely about this ultra

bomb they're developing that I figured there wasn't much to it. But that list of requests you sent gave me second thoughts."

Kirby lit his pipe. He said slowly, "I'm not a chemist, and this uranium thing is mainly a chemical engineering problem. Electricity does come into production techniques. A couple of months ago I was asked to be a consultant. The bomb is probably years away, although the nuclear boys say it could be practicable now."

"Do you mind telling me about it?"

Kirby shook his head. "It's public knowledge. There's a rare hot isotope of uranium, U-235. This substance may turn out to have fantastic explosive powers, through a chain reaction that gives you a huge release of energy. Or it may be a complete false alarm. The amount of pure U-235 these chemical engineers want will take one hell of a big industrial effort to deliver. You're talking of millions of dollars—and you could end up with a crock of manure."

"Where do you come into it?"

Kirby rubbed his pipe against his chin. "Okay, how do you separate out isotopes of a very rare metal in industrial quantities? One notion is to shoot it in the form of an ionized gas through a magnetic field. The whole game depends on the magnetic field being kept stable. Precise control of voltages is my business."

"One last point. Do you think the President should be advised to get off his ass about uranium?"

"The question is, how far along are the Germans? Their sensitivity about graphite disturbs me. Graphite comes in at a late stage. If Hitler gets uranium bombs first, it could be disagreeable."

A doorbell rang. "I guess that's your daughter," Kirby said. "Let's go down to dinner."

ON THE flying bridge of the fishing boat *Blue Bird*, moving gently along in the Gulf Stream, Byron and Natalie lay in each other's arms. Below, the jowly skipper yawned at the wheel, and the ship-to-shore telephone dimly crackled. Sunburned, all but naked in swimming suits, the lovers had forgotten the fish, the lines, and the skipper. It seemed the sun shone on them alone.

There was a loud rapping from below. "Hey, Mr. Henry!"

"What is it?" Byron answered hoarsely.

"They're calling us from the beach," the skipper shouted. "Your father wants you to come on in."

"My father? Wrong boat. He's in Washington."

"Wait one—" They heard the squawking of the ship-to-shore.

"Hey, Mr. Henry. Your father—is he Captain Victor Henry?"

"That's right."

"Well, the office has your girl's mother on the telephone. Your father's at her house and wants you to get back in pronto."

Byron called, "Okay, let's head back."

Natalie sat up, her eyes wide and startled. "What on earth?"

"Probably he's here with my mother, and she wants a look at you. I can't blame her, the way I shot down here. If so, I'm going to tell them."

Natalie's face turned anxious. "Angel, there's some Jewish law about not getting married too soon after a parent dies. Don't make such a face! I'm not going to observe it. But I can't distress my mother at this point. I need *some* time."

"Lord, Natalie, that's a blow."

"Sweetie, I wasn't planning on marrying you at all until about an hour ago." She shook her head and laughed ruefully. "I feel weird. Isn't it all like a fever dream?"

He put his arm around her shoulders, holding her close as the boat picked up speed. "Not to me. It's damned real. Reality just seems to be starting."

As the *Blue Bird* drew in toward the beach, Byron said, "There he is on the pier. Pacing back and forth."

Natalie darted into the cabin, saying to the skipper, "Slow down, please." She emerged in a cotton skirt and white blouse, her black hair brushed gleaming and loose to her shoulders.

Victor Henry, leaning down from the pier, held out a hand as the boat stopped. "Hello, Natalie," he said, helping her out.

Byron leaped ashore. "What's up, Dad? Is everybody okay?"

"Have you two had lunch?"

Natalie laughed nervously. "I brought sandwiches. . . . We, well, forgot about lunch."

"Well, I haven't. D'you mind if we go in there?" He pointed at a clam bar on the pier. "These waterfront places can be good."

They sat in a tiny plywood booth, eating clam chowder and bacon-and-tomato sandwiches. "I had a good chat with your mother, Natalie," Pug said. "She's holding up remarkably." He turned to Byron. "Have you heard the radio? The British Expeditionary Force is hightailing it for the Channel, but it may already be too late. The Germans may actually bag the entire British army."

"Good God," Byron said. "If they do that the war's over! How could this happen in three days?"

"Well, it has. I just heard the President on my car radio, asking a joint session of Congress for fifty thousand airplanes a year. In the mood I saw in Washington yesterday, he'll get them. Congress has come awake in a hurry. Now." Pug lit a cigarette. "Warren's leave has been canceled, so he and Janice are getting married tomorrow. They'll have a one-day honeymoon, and then he goes straight out to the Pacific Fleet. So. Number one: You've got to get to Pensacola by tomorrow at ten, to be his best man."

With a hesitant look at Natalie, Byron said, "I'll be there."

"Number two: If you want to get into that May twenty-seventh class at sub school, you must take the physical by Saturday."

Natalie said to Byron, "Are you going to sub school *in eleven days*?" She turned to his father. "How long is the school?"

"It's six months."

"What will become of him afterward?"

"My guess is he'll go straight out to the fleet."

"Natalie, we'll talk about all that," Byron said. "I hope you'll come with me to the wedding. Janice asked me to bring you." He turned to his father. "Natalie and I are getting married."

With an appraising glance at Natalie, who was biting her lower lip, Pug said, "I see. Well, that might or might not affect your admittance. In general, unmarried candidates get preference."

Natalie broke in. "Captain Henry, we only decided this morning. The last thing I'd ever do is stop him from going to submarine school. My God, I saw the Germans in Warsaw!"

Victor Henry nodded and looked at his watch, then at his son. "Well, that's that. Great chowder. There's a plane I can still make to Pensacola. Your mother and Madeline are flying from New York. I'm meeting them at the hotel."

"Why didn't you just telephone all this?" Byron said. "Why did you come here?"

"You took off from New York like a rocket, Byron. I didn't know your plans. I wasn't even sure you'd come to the wedding."

"I wouldn't have heard of his not going," Natalie said.

"Well, I thought a little persuasion might be necessary. About sub school, Byron. I told Red Tully I'd call today."

"If Captain Tully has to know today, then I'm out."

Natalie struck the table. "Damn it, Byron. Don't make decisions like that. I'm involved too."

Victor Henry cleared his throat. "Well, I'll shove off. We can pick this topic up tomorrow."

"Oh?" Byron's tone was acid. "Then you don't really have to call Captain Tully today, after all."

Victor Henry's face darkened. "Byron, the Germans are creating your problem. I'm not. I'm just calling it to your attention. I think you'd make a good submariner. On the other hand, I can't hate you for wanting to marry this beautiful young lady." He paid the check and stood. "Good-by, Natalie. Try to come to Pensacola."

"Thank you." A sad little smile lit her face. When he went out, she turned to Byron. "Why did you treat him like that?"

"Like what? I know why he came here, that's all. He came to separate us." His voice rang like his father's.

"He was right. You're blaming *him* for the way the war is going. That's the essence of immaturity. I was embarrassed for you."

Byron looked at her. "I have never wanted anything before, not of life, not of him, not of anybody. Now I do."

20

WITH a groan, to the clatter of an alarm clock, Lieutenant (jg.) Warren Henry woke at seven on his wedding day. Until four he had been in the sweet arms of his bride-to-be in a hotel room outside Pensacola. As he stumbled to the shower, he wondered whether his behavior hadn't been somewhat gross. But after all, a rushed wedding, a one-night honeymoon, and then a separation of thousands of miles was too much to ask of human nature.

For all his remorse, the prospect of the parting was not bothering Warren much. Janice would be in Pearl Harbor soon, and the sudden orders to the Pacific had put him in an excited glow. Because war threatened, he was rushing to fly a fighter plane from the USS *Enterprise*. His spirits soaring, he rang for the mess steward, ordered double ham and eggs, and set about getting dressed.

"Come in!" he called to a knock on his door. "Hey, *Briny!*" he said, when he saw who it was. "Gosh, how long has it been?"

Warren ordered more breakfast for his brother. "Sit down. We have a lot to catch up on. I'm supposed to be the warrior, but you're the one who got strafed by the Nazis!"

They talked over the food and while Warren packed, each taking the other's measure. Warren had last seen Byron as a hangdog, slouching youngster with a bad school record and pimples. Now Byron's skin was brown and clear; his Italian suit and mop of reddish hair gave him a dashing appearance that went with his Polish saga. Warren, who had never envied his younger brother anything, envied the red scar on his temple.

"What about Natalie, Byron? Did she come?"

"Sure. I parked her at Janice's house. That was decent of Janice, telephoning her last night! You know, we're getting married."

"Good for you. She sounds like a marvelous girl. You marrying up now, or after sub school?"

"Who the devil says I'm going to sub school?"

Warren deftly moved clothes from bureau to a footlocker. "Dad's right, Byron. If you wait till you get called up, they'll shove you around and you may not even draw the duty you want. But why in heaven's name do you want subs when you could fly?"

"I got interested in subs." Byron described Prien's talk in Berlin on the sinking of the *Royal Oak*.

"That was a brave exploit," Warren admitted. "But this is an air war, Briny. Planes are the thing from now on." Tossing Byron a large gray book, he said with a grin, "Take a look through *The Flight Jacket*. I'm there in Squadron Five. I've got to pay some bills, then we're off to church."

Byron opened the yearbook. "Holy cow, Warren, number one in ground school! How'd you do that and court Janice, too?"

"It took a toll." Warren made an exhausted face, and they both laughed. But more than ever it seemed to Byron that Warren was on top of the world and ahead of his brother.

NATALIE had often visited the homes of wealthy college friends, but the Lacouture mansion—a rambling stone house on the bay—unsettled her with its air of gentility and seclusion. Janice scampered to meet her in a fluttery pink housecoat, her blond hair flying. "Hi! So sweet of you to come on this short notice. Look at me. I'll never be ready. Let's get you some breakfast."

"Please, just put me in some corner till we go. I'm fine." This happy girl, all pink and gold, made Natalie acutely conscious of her own dark eyes, dark hair, and wrinkled linen suit.

Janice was scanning her with keen eyes. "No wonder Byron fell for you. Gosh, you're pretty. Come along."

In a breakfast alcove facing the water, a maid brought her eggs and coffee on a silver tray. Natalie ate, and felt better, if no more at home. Clocks struck, and she could hear excited voices upstairs. She took a letter from her purse, five faintly typed pages; A.J. would never learn to change a typewriter ribbon.

It was a long tale of woe, beginning with a broken ankle caused by a fall, proceeding finally to his citizenship problem, which he was now taking seriously. He had "derivative citizenship" from his father's naturalization around 1900, but difficulties had been caused by conflicting records of Aaron's age at the time. The man in Rome had demanded more and more documents, and Aaron had returned to Siena in deep confusion. He had decided to let the thing cool off and ask for the passport renewal later.

During the spasm of alarm over Norway, he had visited the Florence consulate. There a "shallow but seemingly affable crew-cut type" had conceded that Dr. Jastrow was an eminent and desirable person, and that the consular service would somehow solve the difficulty. The letter concluded:

What comes next still makes me boil. Crew-cut wrote that Congress had recently passed a law admitting certain special classes of refugees; if I were to apply I probably would have no trouble,

being a prominent Jew. So not only did this idiot want me to abandon all claim to being an American—which I am—but he said it all on paper and put it in the mail. Of course it was opened and read. The Italian authorities now know my problem, and that alarmingly increases my vulnerability. I am giving this letter to a French friend to mail.

Natalie, I have certainly been heedless about a very important matter. I can only plead that before the war these things seemed of no consequence. Happily, there's no desperate urgency, but I had better clarify my right to go home. Now will you tell all this to Leslie Slote? A noose of red tape can be cut by one word spoken in the right place.

The sound of feet on a staircase brought Natalie back from Siena to Pensacola Bay. Voices laughed and chattered; and the bride came sailing in, wheat-colored hair beautifully coiffed and laced with pearls, cheeks pink with pleasure. "Well, I did it!"

Natalie jumped to her feet. "Oh, you're the loveliest sight!" The white satin, clinging to flanks and breasts like creamy skin, rose demurely to cover Janice's throat. She moved in a cloud of white lace. The blend of white chastity and fleshly allure was devastating. The bride's eye had an ironic gleam. She felt approximately as virginal as Catherine of Russia.

"Come," Janice said. "You're riding with me."

NATALIE knew at once that the handsome woman in green chiffon and white straw hat didn't like her. Rhoda's polite handshake outside the church, her prim smile, told all.

Pug introduced Natalie to Madeline as "Byron's sidekick on the Polish jaunt," obviously trying with this clumsy jocularly to make up for his wife's freeze.

"Oh, yes, wow!" Madeline smiled. Her shantung suit was the smartest outfit in sight. "I want to hear about that! I still haven't seen Briny, you know, and it's been more than two years."

"He shouldn't have rushed down to Miami the way he did," Natalie said, feeling her cheeks redden.

"Why not?" said Madeline, with a slow Byron-like grin. It was strange to see echoes of his traits in his family. His mother held

her head as he did, erect on a long neck. It made him seem more remote, not just himself but part of a quite alien group.

The church was full. From the moment she entered the front pew with Rhoda, Pug, and Madeline, Natalie felt uncomfortable. All around her were women in bright or pastel colors, and officers and air cadets in white and gold. And there she stood at a May wedding in black linen, worn out of a vague sense that she was still in mourning and didn't belong here. People peered at her and whispered. How charming and fine the church was, with its dark, carved wooden ceiling arching up from the stone walls; how pleasant and normal to be born an Episcopalian or a Methodist, and to be married this way! Perhaps Slote was right, and encouraging Byron had been irresponsible. Slote was a bookish pagan like herself, and they would have been married by a judge.

As the bride paced down the aisle on the congressman's arm, Rhoda started to cry. Memories of her own wedding, of other young men who had wanted to marry her, and of herself—a mother before twenty of the baby who had grown into this handsome groom—flooded her mind. She forgot about the melancholy Jewish girl in black. When Pug softly took her hand, she clasped his. What fine sons they had, standing up there together!

And Pug stood slightly hunched, wondering at the speed with which his life was going, and realizing how little he allowed himself to think about Warren, because he had such inordinately high hopes for him.

Standing there with his brother, Byron felt many eyes measuring and comparing them. Warren's uniform, and the other uniforms in the church, troubled him. Beside them his Italian suit with its exaggerated lines seemed as frivolous as a woman's dress.

As Janice lifted her veil, she and Warren exchanged an intimately amused glance. And with the minister beaming on them they embraced, kissed, and laughed over a war-born joke that would last their whole lives and that nobody else would ever know.

A JOYOUS crowd poured into the beach club for the wedding luncheon. Natalie hung back a little on Byron's arm. "When I walk through that door," she said, "I'm going to set off gongs." He burst

out laughing, and she went on, "I do think your mother might be a wee bit happier if a wall had fallen on me in Warsaw."

Champagne glass in hand, Byron firmly took her from room to room, introducing her to the wedding party. "Don't say I'm your fiancée," Natalie pleaded. "Let them think what they will, but don't let's get into all that." She met Captain Henry's father, a short, withered, upright man who had traveled in from California; and a knot of Rhoda's kin, Grovers of Washington, D.C., whose polished manners and expensive clothes set them off from the other guests, even the Lacoutures.

Later, Warren asked Natalie to dance, and as soon as they were out on the floor he said, "I told Byron this morning that I'm for you. That was sight unseen."

"Do you—a flier—always take such blind risks?"

"I know what you did in Warsaw. That's enough. Byron seems changed already. There's a lot to him, but nobody's ever pressed the right button. I think you're the girl to do it."

Rhoda swooped past and gathered them up to join a family table by the window. Lacouture was declaring that the President's request for fifty thousand airplanes was hysterical. "We have three thousand miles of good green water between us and Europe," he said, "and that's better protection for us than half a million airplanes. The Germans haven't got one that can fly to Scotland, let alone to America. Roosevelt just wants planes for England and France. But he'll never come out and *say* that."

"You're willing to see the British and French go down, then," Pug Henry said.

"Ask me if I'm willing to send three million American boys to prop up the old status quo in Europe. That's what this is all about."

"The British are propping up our own status quo free of charge, Congressman. If the Nazis get hold of their navy, that'll extend Hitler's reach to Pensacola Bay."

Lacouture said, "Yes, I can just see the *Rodney* and *Nelson* out there, flying the swastika and shelling our poor old beach club."

This raised a laugh. Rhoda said, "What a charming thought."

The easy, amused war talk over roast beef and champagne had begun to irritate Natalie. She was glad when Byron came and took

her away. "Can we go outside?" she said. "I don't want to dance."

They sat on the low wall of the terrace in the sun. Byron leaned toward her. "Darling, I think I may as well fly up to New London today or tomorrow to take that physical— What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Go on. You're flying to New London?"

"Only if you agree. I'll do nothing that we both don't concur in, from now on and forever."

"All right."

"Well, I'll also make sure that a married applicant has a chance, and that if he's admitted he gets to spend time with his wife. That takes care of your first few months. If I get through, you'll come along to whatever base I go to, the way Janice is doing."

Victor Henry appeared on the terrace. Byron said coolly and distantly, "Hi, looking for me?"

"Hi. I hear you're driving Madeline to the airport. Don't leave without me. I just talked to Washington and I've got to scoot back."

"When's your plane?" asked Natalie.

"One forty," Pug told her, and went back into the club.

Natalie said, "I think I'll go to Washington on that plane."

"Why Washington, for crying out loud?" Byron said.

She put a hand to his face. "Aaron asked me to talk to Slote about his passport problem. While you're in New London, I can take care of it. What's the matter? You look as if you've been shot."

Byron stood up stiffly. "You're mistaken. It's all right."

Warren insisted on coming to the airport too. "How do I know when I'll see you all again?" he kept saying. The upshot was that the Henrys plus the bride and Natalie all piled into Lacouture's Cadillac. Rhoda on the way out had snatched a bottle of champagne and some glasses. "This family has been GYPED by this miserable, stupid war," she declared, handing the glasses around. "Well, I say, if our time together is short it's damn well going to be merry. Somebody sing something."

When the car drove into the airport they were singing Pug's favorite, that ended:

*Till we meet, till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again.*

As THE Battle of France went on, people began at last to perceive that mankind's destiny now hung on flying machines. The French implored the retreating British to throw all their aircraft into the battle, but this the British did not do. Their Commander in Chief, Fighter Command, Air Marshal Dowding, told Winston Churchill that twenty-five squadrons had to be kept intact to save England, and Churchill listened to him. The French collapse thus became foredoomed, if it had ever been anything else.

"I see only one way through now," Churchill wrote, "to wit, that Hitler should attack this country, and in so doing break his air weapon. If this happens, he will be left to face the winter with Europe writhing under his heel, and probably with the United States against him after the presidential election is over."

Although the United States was safe from air attack in 1940, the German conquest of Europe and the growing menace of Japan posed a danger to its future safety. The question arose: If selling aging warplanes to the British would enable them to go on knocking down German aircraft and wrecking German factories, might not that be the best security for America while new, more powerful machines were being built? The answer, from the U. S. Navy, Army, War Department, Congress, press, and public, was a roaring *No!* Franklin Roosevelt wanted to help the British, but he could not sell them so much as a plane without risking impeachment.

IT WAS a shock for Victor Henry to see Franklin Roosevelt out from behind the desk in a wheelchair. The shirt-sleeved President was massive and powerful-looking down to the waist; below that, thin seersucker trousers hung pitifully on the slack fleshless legs. He was looking at a painting propped on a chair—a British man-of-war under full sail tossed on high seas. Beside him stood the vice-chief of naval operations for air, a man with whom Victor Henry had had his disagreements.

"Hello therel" The President gave Pug a hearty handshake. "Admiral, you know Captain Henry, of course? His boy's just gotten his wings at Pensacola. How about this picture, Pug? Like it?"

"It's fine, Mr. President. But I'm a sucker for sea scenes."

"So am I, but d'you know the rigging's wrong?" The President pointed out the flaws, relishing his expertise. Then he turned his chair toward the admiral. "Well, what about it? Are we going to put Pug Henry to work on that little thing? Will he do?"

The admiral had been training his ferocious white eyebrows like weapons at Victor Henry. "As I say, Mr. President, a naval aviator would be a far more logical choice, but—" He gestured reluctant submission. Picking up his white cap, he said, "Henry, see me at my office tomorrow morning at eight."

"Aye aye, sir."

The admiral left, and Roosevelt wheeled himself to his desk. "Golly, the sun's going down, and it's still sweltering in here. Would you like a drink? I'm supposed to mix a passable martini."

"Nothing better, sir."

The President pressed a buzzer and a valet appeared. "Let's go," Roosevelt said to him. "Come along, Pug."

All down one long hall, in the elevator, and down another hall, the President glanced at papers and scrawled notes. His gusto for the work was evident, despite the heavy purple smudges under his eyes. They arrived in a small dowdy sitting room hung with sea paintings. The President handed all the papers to the valet, who wheeled a small cocktail bar beside his chair and left.

"Well, how was the wedding, Pug?" asked the President, measuring out gin and vermouth like an apothecary. He wanted to know about the Lacouture house, and laughed wryly at Victor Henry's account of the congressman's arguments. "Well, that's what we're up against. And Ike Lacouture's running for the Senate. He'll give us real trouble if he gets in."

A very tall woman came into the room. "Just in time!" exclaimed the President. "This is the famous Pug Henry, dear."

"Oh? What a pleasure." Mrs. Roosevelt firmly shook hands, surveying Pug with the astute eyes of a flag officer. Her smile was gentle and sweet, despite the much caricatured protruding teeth. "What do you think of the way the war's going, Captain?"

"It's very bad, ma'am."

Roosevelt said, "Are you surprised?"

Pug took a minute. "Well, sir, back in January, all German government war contracts had a terminal date of July first, indicating they were mighty sure the western campaign would be short."

Roosevelt's eyes widened. "That was never brought to my attention. Very interesting."

They talked about the meeting with Hitler at Karinhall. Mrs. Roosevelt interjected in a sharp, serious tone, "Captain, do you think that Mr. Hitler is a madman?"

"Ma'am, he gave a rundown on the history of central Europe that all meshed together and ticked like a watch."

"Or a time bomb," said the President.

Pug smiled at the grim joke. "This is an excellent martini, Mr. President. It tastes like it isn't there. Just a cold cloud."

Roosevelt's eyebrows went up in delight. "You've described the *perfect* martini! Thank you." The President went on in a business-like tone, "That Sumner Welles trip didn't come to anything, Pug, but we made the effort. You were very helpful. What would you think of going to England for a spell as a naval observer? Possibly after a month more in Berlin?"

Hoping the mood was as pleasant as it seemed, Pug said, "Mr. President, any chance of my not going back to Berlin?"

Roosevelt looked gravely at the captain for an uncomfortable few seconds. "You go back there, Pug. I know you're a seafaring man. You'll get your sea command."

"Yes, Mr. President."

"I'd be interested in your impressions of London." The President grinned slyly. "But right now you're going to be in charge of getting those surplus navy dive bombers to the British. No sense having a lot of old planes cluttering up our training stations. Eh?"

"Is that definite at last? How wonderful," said his wife.

"Yes. Naturally the aviators don't like to part with planes. Pug will pry them loose. Of course it may be the end of me if word gets out. *That'll* solve the third-term question! What's your guess on that one, Pug? Is that man in the White House going to break George Washington's rule and try for a third term?"

"Sir, all I know is that for the next four years we're going to need a strong Commander in Chief."

A CRASHING THUNDERSTORM caught Pug as he was leaving the White House. He ducked into a crowded doorway marked PRESS.

All at once a hand thwacked his shoulder. "I say, Henry, you've got yourself another stripe!" Alistair Tudsbury beamed down at him through thick glasses.

"Hello there, Tudsbury!"

"Why aren't you in Berlin, old man?" As he spoke, a small black British car pulled up to the entrance in the streaming rain and honked. "That's Pamela. Come along with us to the British embassy for cocktails. You'll meet some chaps you ought to know." Tudsbury propelled him through the rain and into the car. "Pam, look whom I bagged outside the press room!"

"Why, how marvelous." Pamela clasped Pug's hand, smiling. On her own left hand a new small diamond sparkled. "Tell me about your family," she said, as they drove off. "Is your wife well? And the boy who was caught in Poland?"

"My wife's fine, and so's Byron. By the way, the girl he went to Poland with is Natalie Jastrow. She says she knows you."

"*Natalie Jastrow!* Really?" Pamela gave Henry a quizzical glance. "Oh, yes. She was visiting a chap in your embassy in Warsaw, I should think. Leslie Slote."

"Exactly. And now she and my son intend to get married."

"Bless me. Well, she's an extraordinary girl."

"Slote's coming to this party," Tudsbury said.

"I know," Pamela said. She wove through the swarming traffic of Connecticut and Massachusetts avenues. Her streaking arrival at the British embassy drew glares from several policemen.

They went inside and joined the reception line, which extended up the wide red-carpeted stairs. The guest of honor, a skinny, ruddy man of fifty or so, stood with the ambassador at the top. "How are you, Pam? Hullo there, Talky," he said. Pam walked on, disappearing into the crowd.

"Captain Henry, Air Commodore Burne-Wilke," Tudsbury said. "Burne-Wilke is here to try to scare up any old useless airplanes you happen to have lying around."

"Yes, best prices offered," said the RAF man, smiling.

Tudsbury led Pug through two large, smoky reception rooms, in-

roducing him to many people. Everyone appeared merry, and the scene struck Victor Henry as incongruous, considering the war news. They came upon Pamela drinking at a large round table with Leslie Slote and Natalie Jastrow. Natalie gave Pug a haggard smile, saying, "Small world."

After Pamela had introduced her father to Natalie, Slote said, "Talky, maybe you can settle our argument. What are the chances that Italy will jump into the war?"

"It's too soon. Mussolini will wait until France has all but stopped twitching. Why do you ask?"

Natalie said, "I've got an old uncle in Siena who has to be fetched out. There's nobody but me to do it."

Pamela jumped up. "Will you dance with me?" she said to Pug. "Why, sure." He was puzzled by the sudden request.

"Thanks," she said, as he accompanied her toward the musicians. "Phil Rule was heading for us. I've had enough of him."

Pug took her in his arms. "Phil Rule?"

"He was the man in my life for far too long. He'd been at Oxford with Leslie Slote and was rooming with him in Paris. Phil's an excellent correspondent, but a monster. They're a pair of rips."

"Slote's the brainy, quiet type, I thought."

"They can be the worst. They have pressure-cooker souls, those fellows." She said more cheerfully, "I'm engaged to be married."

"I noticed your ring. Who is he, Pamela?"

"His name's Ted Gallard. He's twenty-eight, comes from an old Northamptonshire family. He's a fighter pilot in the RAF."

When the music changed they walked to the foyer and sat under a bright, bad painting of Queen Mary. Pamela was looking, he thought, exceptionally pretty; her hair, so often pulled back in a thick bun, hung to her shoulders now in glossy brown waves.

"I have a yen to go home and join the WAAFs—our Women's Auxiliary Air Force. What do you think?"

"Me? I approve. Your father can get another secretary. Your lucky RAF man is there."

She colored at the word lucky. "It's not that simple. Talky's eyes get tired. He likes to dictate and have things read to him. He keeps weird hours, works in the bathtub, and so on."

"Then he'll have to indulge his eccentricities less."

"But is it right just to abandon him?"

"He's your father, Pamela, not your son."

Pamela's eyes glistened at him. "Well, perhaps we should return to him now, Captain Henry."

He said as they stood up, "Why not call me Pug? Everybody does who knows me."

"Yes, I've heard them. What does it mean?"

"I was a boxer in school, so I got tagged Pug."

"You boxed? Do you still?"

He grinned. "Too strenuous. Tennis is my game now."

"Oh? I play fair tennis."

"If I ever get to London, maybe we can have a game."

"Is there"—she hesitated—"a chance of your coming to London?"

"It's not impossible."

As they reached the table, Slote stood up and offered his hand to Natalie, who rose too. "We have theater tickets," he said. "We'll have to leave if we're to get some dinner first."

Slote bought Natalie a luxurious dinner, took her to the theater, then to his apartment, hoping for the best. In a common masculine way, he thought he could win her back in one evening. Never had he wanted anything as he now wanted Natalie.

He opened his apartment door and snapped on lights. "Ye gods, a quarter to one. How about a drink?"

"If I'm to search New York courthouses for Aaron's documents tomorrow, I'd better get to bed."

"Let me see his letter again. You mix us a couple of shorties."

Slote sank in an armchair, donned black-rimmed glasses, and studied the letter. He took a government tome from the bookshelves, and drank, and read. Finally he said, "Aaron's in trouble on several counts. There's the problem about his father's naturalization. But even if that's all right, there's this rule that a naturalized citizen who lives abroad continuously for more than five years forfeits his citizenship." He held up the book. "Come here."

Natalie sat on the arm of the chair, and Slote showed her a list of exceptions to the five-year rule, some of which seemed to fit

Aaron Jastrow's case—as when health was a reason for staying abroad. “Unsnarling this through regular channels could take months,” Slote said. “The best thing now, by far, is to get the Secretary of State to drop a word to Rome. If he will cooperate, Aaron will be in the clear the minute that letter arrives. I’ll get on to it first thing in the morning.”

Natalie smiled at him. “It certainly helps to know a man who knows a man, doesn’t it? Well! If I’m to hang around Washington, we’ll have to get me a hotel room, Leslie. I’m certainly not going to stay here after tonight. I feel damned odd even about that.”

“I called hotels for an hour. There are four conventions in town.”

“If Byron finds out, God help me.”

“Won’t he believe I slept on the couch?”

“He’ll have to. Leslie, will you get me permission to go to Italy? Without me, Aaron will never pull himself together and leave.”

He shook his head. “I told you, the department’s advising Americans to get out of Italy. But I don’t think you want to go there to help Aaron. Not really. You’re just running away, Natalie. You’re in way over your head with your submarine boy.”

“Aren’t you clever!” Natalie said. “I leave in the morning, Slote, if I have to stay at the YWCA. But I’ll make your breakfast first. Do you still eat eggs fried to leather?”

“I’ve changed very little, darling. Care for a nightcap?”

She hesitated. “Oh, why not?”

Humming happily, Leslie Slote went to the kitchen and emerged with two very dark highballs.

“Thanks. That was a mean crack about Byron, Leslie.”

“Wasn’t it the truth, Natalie?”

“All right. If we’re playing the truth game, isn’t it simpler today than it was a year ago for a Foreign Service officer to have a Jewish wife, since the Nazis are now beyond the pale?”

His cheery look vanished. “That never once occurred to me.”

“It didn’t have to occur to you.” She stood, sipping her highball. “My goodness, what a rich drink. I do believe you’re nothing but a wolf.”

He took her by the shoulders. “I love you. I’ll try every way I can to get you back.”

"Fair enough. But Leslie, I must go to Italy. My father was worrying over Aaron the day he died. Maybe this is irrational expiation, but I've got to bring Aaron home."

"I'll arrange it, if it's arrangeable."

"Now you're talking. Thanks. Good night." She put down her glass, kissed him lightly, and went into the bedroom.

22

AT EIGHT o'clock the next morning, the vice-chief of naval operations for air was drinking coffee with a man in RAF uniform. It was Air Commodore Burne-Wilke; he nodded at Victor Henry.

"Good morning, Henry," said the admiral. "You've met the air commodore? Good. Have a cup of coffee and let's get at it." The wiry old man bounced from his desk to a wall map of the United States. "Here, here, and here"—his finger jumped to Pensacola, St. Louis, and Chicago—"we've got fifty-three old-type scout bombers, SBU's, that have been declared surplus. We want to get them back to the manufacturer—Chance Vought in Stratford, Connecticut—and get all U. S. Navy markings and special equipment removed. Our British friends will then pick 'em up and fly 'em to a carrier in Halifax. For obvious reasons, involving the Neutrality Act"—the admiral glared at Pug—"this is a touchy business. So we don't want to leave a conspicuous trail. You can have a plane to take you around and you should start today."

"Aye aye, sir."

"We have sixty pilots standing by," said Burne-Wilke. "How soon d'you suppose you could have the planes, Captain Henry?"

Pug studied the map. "Day after tomorrow, sir. Would that be convenient? It'll take some time to get off those markings."

The Englishman stared at him. "Day after tomorrow? We were thinking in terms of a week from now. We've given some of the fliers leave. How about Wednesday? That gives us all four days."

"Very well, sir."

"Then I had better get right at this." Burne-Wilke left at once. As the door closed, the admiral said, "Day after tomorrow, hey?"

"Admiral, I didn't think those pilots were really standing by."

The two men exchanged a look of amusement. The admiral then explained a scheme the President had elicited from the Attorney General for selling the planes to England. First, the navy was declaring them surplus. Second, Chance Vought was accepting them for a trade-in on new F4U's at a good price, which it could do since it was selling the old planes to England at a profit. The catch was that the delivery of the F4U's lay far in the future.

"Now, Henry, there's no question of concealment in the long run. But if this were announced in advance, there'd be a big storm and a chance of congressional investigation. Somebody like you could end up a goat. This is a volunteer job. Strictly volunteer."

"Aye aye, sir," said Pug. "I'd better start right away."

May 23

Briny, my love—

Brace yourself. When you receive this I ought to be in Lisbon. I'm flying to Italy to fetch Uncle Aaron. With luck I'll be back in two months or less. Sweetheart, don't be angry. It's good for both of us to catch our breaths. Your father's visit to Miami was an alarm clock, and it rang just in time.

Darling—weren't you having sober second thoughts about me at Warren's wedding? Honestly, I could see your mother's viewpoint. Why on earth should her little boy want to marry this dusky old Jewess when there are Rhine maidens like Janice around? Should you and I try to bridge such a big gap in background and interest? I'm *not* backing out, Byron, *I love you*. But a couple of months to think this over is no hardship, it's a godsend.

I enclose Aaron's letter describing his whole problem. Leslie Slote was marvelous. He dropped everything to solve Aaron's mess, and word has now gone to Rome *from the Secretary's office* to expedite Aaron's return. Don't be jealous of Leslie. I've told him that I love you and have promised to marry you.

I'm dashing this off in the airport. I didn't go home. I stopped in New York and bought enough things to see me through the trip—one suitcase full! You'll be admitted to submarine school, I'm positive, and I think deep down you want it. When I come back, if you still want me, I'm yours.

Love you,
Natalie

THREE DAYS BEFORE the start of his course, Byron sat in a furnished room in New London and read this shocking letter over and over. He was scanning Aaron's faintly typed sheets when the telephone jarred him. "Ensign Henry? Commandant's office. Your father's here. He's gone with Captain Tully to inspect the *Tambor* at Electric Boat. If you want to join them they're at Pier Six."

"Thank you." Sore at being followed even here by his father, Byron rushed off, hot to vent his anger.

Victor Henry, meanwhile, walking through the new submarine with his classmate, was in high good humor. The scout-bomber job was done. It had taken a lot of work and travel, and he was red-eyed with lack of sleep. When his son caught up with him, he and the commandant were in the forward torpedo room.

"Hello, Dad. What brings you here?"

The harsh voice and the look on Byron's face told Pug something serious was wrong. "Happened to be nearby, so I thought I'd mosey over. You met Byron yet, Red?"

"Not yet." Captain Tully offered his hand. "Welcome aboard, Byron. You're in for a rough couple of months."

"I'll try to survive, sir." At the almost contemptuous words, Red Tully's eyes shifted disapprovingly to the father.

"Say, what the devil's the matter with you?" Victor Henry snapped, as he and his son came out on deck, leaving Tully below. "You'd better watch your tone toward your superiors."

"Read this." Byron thrust out an envelope.

Victor Henry's face was flushed when he had read the letter.

"Quite a girl. I've said that before."

"If anything happens to her over there, I'll hold you responsible, Dad, and I'll never forget it."

"That's unreasonable. She went to Italy because of her uncle."

"No. You scared her off by saying I might not get admitted here if I were married. It wasn't true. A lot of the men are married."

"Well, if I misled her, I'm sorry." Pug felt guilty. Natalie's sudden flight was a blow that even he could feel. Suppose she had been the best thing for this drifting youngster? Suppose, despite all good fatherly intentions, her being Jewish had made a difference?

Two weeks later Victor Henry left for Europe. Because of the

worsening of the war, Rhoda stayed behind. Pug had suggested that she make a home for Madeline in New York, and Rhoda had rather enthusiastically agreed.

NATALIE had found it surprisingly easy to get a plane ticket into the warring continent; the hard thing was to get around. She tried for five days to fly from Lisbon to Rome, then gave up on the airlines and booked passage on a Greek freighter bound for Naples. The wretched voyage took a week. En route, the ship's radio squawked the BBC stories of the French government's flight from Paris, of Churchill's promise to fight to the end, and of Italy's jump into the war. She arrived in Italy nervous and exhausted, feeling she had better get Aaron out of Siena at once.

But neither in Naples nor in Rome was there much sign that Italy was at war. And in Siena nothing had changed. It took her half an hour to find a working taxicab.

Aaron sat reading under a big elm. "Natalie! You made it!" He came stumping toward her on a cane, with one foot in a metal brace. "Come inside, my dear, you'll want some refreshment."

In his study the piles of manuscript, notes, and the array of reference books were all in the same places. "Why, Aaron, you haven't even begun to pack!"

"We'll talk about it over tea," he said, with an embarrassed smile. "I suppose you'd like to wash first? You look positively boiled."

"But didn't word come from Washington?"

"Oh yes. That was fine of Leslie." He sank into a chair. It seemed that the day Italy entered the war, a man from the Italian security police had come to warn him that, as a stateless person of Polish origin, he was confined to Siena until further notice.

The next day Natalie went to see the young crew-cut consul in Florence. He had a pink-and-white face, gentle blue eyes, and the lower lip pulled in as though at some permanent grievance. His desk nameplate read AUGUST VAN WINAKER II. "I'm sorry I kept you waiting," he said, escorting her to a chair, "but I'm up to my ears. People have been scurrying home in droves, and just dumping everything on the consulate. . . . Well." His look seemed to add, What can I do for you?

Natalie told him about Jastrow's new problem, adding, as tactfully as she could, that Italian security undoubtedly knew of his situation from intercepting Van Winaker's own letter.

"Oh, how perfectly awful," gasped the consul. "Is *that* what's happened? You're quite right. I didn't have my thinking cap on when I wrote that letter. Well! I thought I'd seen the last of the Jastrow case. When Rome asked us to expedite your uncle's departure, we issued a visa, jumping him ahead of *hundreds* of names. I'm blessed if I know, just offhand, what we do now."

"May I make a suggestion?" Natalie spoke sweetly. "Just renew his passport. That would stop this statelessness business."

"Oh, that's not so easy. Congress makes the immigration laws, not the consular service."

"Mr. Van Winaker, the Secretary of State himself wants Aaron cleared. You know that."

"Let's get one thing straight. I heard from Rome, but I have had no instructions from the Secretary. He couldn't go on record as intervening for one individual in matters involving equal treatment under law. I couldn't be sorrier, but it's my duty to—"

The man was getting on Natalie's nerves. "It strikes me that your duty is to help us, and you're not doing it."

He opened his eyes very wide. "Tell you what. I'll comb your uncle's file again. Maybe I'll think of something."

"You will try to find a way to give him a passport?"

"Or to get him out. That's a promise. Come back in a week."

23

The Battle of Britain From "World Empire Lost"

After the fall of France, Germany was incomparably stronger than England on the ground, about equally matched in the air, and gravely inferior at sea. Since our whole problem in the summer of 1940 was to force a decision across a sea barrier, the British held a crucial advantage. After Dunkirk they had instituted drastic anti-invasion measures and marshaled their powerful navy to block a Channel crossing. Only in the air, therefore, could Germany now attack.

The so-called Battle of Britain was a triumph of British war propaganda. Most people, including Germans, still believe that a vast and powerful Luftwaffe was defeated by a valorous handful of RAF defenders. In fact, when the contest began, Germany and England each had about a thousand fighter planes. Germany's bomber force was larger, but the English bombers were longer-ranged and more powerfully armed. Hitler and Göring, of course, voiced extravagant boasts about the Luftwaffe to induce the British to make peace. Churchill, on the other hand, played up the idea that England was outnumbered and alone, so as to pull the United States into the war.

Nor does popular history take account of the handicaps under which the Luftwaffe operated. Most of the battle was fought over British air bases. Every German pilot shot down over land was lost to us. But a downed British pilot, if he were unharmed, could soon take another plane into the skies. Our fighters had a fuel limit of ninety minutes or so, most of which was consumed simply in getting to the scene and back. The British pilot could fight until he ran out of bullets or fuel.

Our fighters were further handicapped by orders to fly in close formation with the bombers, like destroyers screening battleships. Fighter squadrons should be free to roam the airspace, spot the enemy, and strike first. Göring could never grasp this. As our bomber losses climbed, he insisted more and more violently that the fighters should nursemaid the bombers, which seriously depressed pilot morale.

Finally, the British in 1940 had one lucky scientific edge. They were first in the field with battleworthy radar. They could follow our incoming flights and speed their fighters straight at us. But for this factor alone, the Luftwaffe might have won a quick knockout victory. For in the end we did all but shoot the RAF out of the skies. Churchill himself states that in September the battle tilted against his fighter command.

Our attack at that point shifted to strategic bombing of London. Churchill asserts that it was Göring's fatal mistake, but in truth, given the onset of bad weather and the provocative British terror bombing of our cities, the shift was almost mandatory.

The Luftwaffe's attack on England in the summer of 1940 was essentially a peacemaking gesture—a limited effort, intended to convince the British that to prolong the war would serve no purpose. That it failed was of course a tragedy for Germany, since after the attack on Russia we were condemned to fight this climactic world battle on two fronts. But it was even more tragic for England. For had England made peace with Germany in 1940, her world empire would almost

surely still be hers. Instead she allied herself with bolshevism to crush Germany, Europe's last bastion against barbaric Asia; and she became as a result a weak, withered satellite of the United States.

Translator's note: Von Roon's discussion of the Battle of Britain is unacceptable. And his assertion that the attack was a "peacemaking gesture" is surely ridiculous. "Popular history" has it right: the British fighter pilots did turn the much larger Luftwaffe back, and saved the world from the Germans. The Luftwaffe in fact never recovered from the Battle of Britain. The blitzkrieg ran out of blitz in Russia a year later because it had dropped too much of it on the fields of Kent and Surrey, and in the streets of London.

—V.H.

24

SILVERY fat barrage balloons, shining in a cloudless sky ahead of Pug's plane, gave the approach to the British Isles a carnival touch. The land below looked very peaceful in the fine August weather. Cars and lorries crawled on narrow roads, between yellow-and-green-patchwork fields. Sheep were grazing, farmers were reaping corn—the pleasant England of picture books and poems.

For Pug it was the end of a tedious week-long journey via Zurich, Madrid, Lisbon, and Dublin. It had begun with the arrival in Berlin of a sealed envelope marked "Top Secret—Captain Victor Henry only." Inside was a letter from the White House:

Dear Pug:

Vice-CNO says you are a longtime booster of "radar." The British are secretly reporting to us a big success in their air battle with something called "RDF"—Radio Direction Finding. How about going there now for a look, as we discussed? You'll get dispatch orders, and our friends will be expecting you. London should be interesting now, if a bit warm. Let me know if you think it's too warm for us to give them fifty destroyers.

FDR

Pug had had mixed feelings. Any excuse to leave Berlin was welcome. The blare and boasts in the newspapers, the women

strolling the boulevards in French silks and cosmetics, and the plunder that improved Berlin menus: Polish hams, Danish butter, French veal and wine—it was all becoming intolerable. The radio announcers' voices claiming staggering destruction of British airplanes and almost no Luftwaffe losses rasped Pug's nerves as he sat alone in the Grunewald mansion. An order to leave all this behind was a boon. But the letter had dismayed him, too, for his shore-bound status appeared to be hardening.

"How the devil do you keep looking so fit?" he said to Blinker Vance, the naval attaché who met him at the London airport. Vance still batted his eyes as he talked, just as he had at Annapolis, and his waist was as flat as it had been then.

"Oh, a couple of hours of tennis a day does it."

"Really? Great war you've got here."

"Oh, the war. It's going on in the sky. Mostly to the south. So far they haven't dropped anything on London."

Pug was struck by the serene look of the city, the density of the auto traffic, and the cheery briskness of the well-dressed crowds. The good things in the shopwindows surprised him. Berlin, even with its infusion of loot, was bleak by comparison.

Vance drove him to an apartment off Grosvenor Square, kept by the navy for visiting senior officers. "This is the end of the line for me," he said. "You'll be hearing from the Limeys next."

When the attaché left, Pug unpacked his bags, then settled down for a nap. The ring of a telephone startled him out of it.

"Captain Henry? Major-General Tillet here." The voice was crisp and very British. "I'm driving down to Portsmouth tomorrow. Possibly drop in on a Chain Home station on the Isle of Wight. Would you care to come along?"

Pug had never heard the expression Chain Home. "That'll be fine, General. Thank you."

"Jolly good! Suppose I pick you up at five, and we avoid the morning traffic? You might take along a shaving kit and a shirt."

It was now six in the evening. Pug turned on the radio. In a calm, almost desultory voice, the broadcaster told of a massive air battle that had been raging all afternoon. The RAF had shot down more than a hundred German planes and had lost twenty-

five. The fight was continuing, the announcer said. If this bulletin were true, Pug thought, an astonishing victory was shaping up.

He found Pamela Tudsbury's number in the telephone book and called it. Another girl, with a charming voice, informed him that Pamela was a WAAF now, working at a headquarters outside London. She gave him the number. He tried it, and there Pamela was.

"Captain Henry! Oh, wonderful! You picked the right day to arrive! Have you heard the news?"

"Yes. But I'm not used to believing the radio."

She gave an exhilarated laugh. "Oh, to be sure. The *Berlin* radio. Well, it's all quite true, though it's not over yet. By the way, if inspection tours are in order for you, I'm working at Group Operations, Number 11 Fighter Group."

"Fine. How's your fiancé?"

"Oh, Ted's fit as a flea. He's on the ground at the moment. Any chance we can see you? We'll be coming to London next week."

"Next week I should still be around."

"Lovely! I'll call you. I'm so glad you're here."

London wore a golden light that evening. Pug walked at random down crooked streets; along elegant rows of houses and through a park where swans glided on calm water. He dined alone in a small restaurant, on good roast beef such as one could only dream of in Berlin. London was a civilian city still, he thought.

The late news that night claimed a hundred and thirty German planes down, forty-nine British. Could it be true?

IT HAD occurred to Victor Henry, after talking to him, that General Tillet might well be E. J. Tillet, the renowned military author. So he was; Pug recognized the small bald general from his photographs. He was not inclined to start a conversation with this forbidding pundit, and Tillet said almost nothing as he spun his car southward. The farther they went, the more warlike the country looked. Signposts were gone, place names were painted out, some towns seemed deserted. Great loops of barbed steel rods arched over the roads. "To stop glider landings," Tillet said briefly.

Finally tiring of the silence, Pug said, "I guess the Germans took a bad beating yesterday."

"I *told* Hitler the range of the Messerschmitt 109 was far too short," Tillet burst out. "He agreed with me and said he'd take it up with Göring. But the thing got lost in the Luftwaffe bureaucracy. It's a great mistake to think dictators are all-powerful! Everybody lies to them, out of fear or sycophancy."

They came to a ruined airfield where burned-out planes stood in skeletal rows. "Jerry caught us napping here," said Tillet. "Göring's just starting to make sense, going for the airfields and plane factories. He's wasted a whole bloody month bombing harbors and convoys. He's only got till the equinox—the Channel's impassable after about September fifteenth. His mission is mastery of the air, not blockade. Define your mission!" he snapped. "And stick to it!"

The airfield was miles behind them when suddenly ahead lay the blue Channel, shining in the sun. They got out and, through Tillet's binoculars, scanned the coast of Hitler's France. Tiny images of houses and ships shimmered on the far shore. "That's as close as Jerry's ever come," Tillet said. "Close enough, too."

Driving on westward along the coast, they passed through boarded-up villages tangled with barbed wire. Camouflaged pill-boxes stood thick along the hills and in the towns. Along the beaches, jagged iron rods spiked up, festooned with wire. As waves rose and fell, queerly shaped tangles of pipe poked above the water. "You're not exactly unprepared," Pug said.

"No. Adolf was decent enough to give us a breather. Those pipes out in the water are the old Greek fire idea. We set the sea ablaze with petroleum, and fry the Germans we don't drown."

In the hills above Portsmouth they stopped for a snack of sandwiches and coffee, which Tillet produced from the trunk. He appeared to have no small talk whatever, and they ate wordlessly until he suddenly gestured with the last of his sandwich. "Look there." A patch of orange was flowering over the city, a barrage balloon on fire. "They're back today, after all. The damned fool's hitting Portsmouth again instead of going inland where he was yesterday and should be. Well, shall we get along down there?"

By the time they reached Portsmouth, fire fighters were streaming water on blazes. Tillet said, "Since Jerry does seem to be com-

ing over, I suggest we go straight on to the Chain Home station at Ventnor. You may find it interesting."

They had the ferry to the Isle of Wight all to themselves. A military car awaited them at the landing, and they drove across the green holiday island, passing mansions shuttered and dead, and saw no other car. The station was a cluster of huts around steel towers thrusting toward the sky. Pug and Tillet were welcomed by the group captain in charge, and taken inside.

Pug's first glimpse of British radarscopes was a deep shock. He listened intently as a civilian scientist described the scopes. But the sharp green pips were news enough. The British had mastered techniques that American experts had told him were twenty years off. In good conditions, the RAF could measure the range of a ship down to a hundred yards, and read that and its bearing off a scope at sight. They could do the same to a single incoming airplane, or count a horde of planes, and give their altitude too.

Pug had two immediate thoughts: that the U. S. Navy had to get hold of this equipment, and that the British were far better prepared for war than the world knew. He admired the quiet sense of drama with which Tillet had bowled him over. "How do you obtain such a sharp beam?" Pug asked the scientist.

"Mm," he mumbled. "It's a question of tube design, circuitry, and so forth. Our cavity magnetron does a pretty good job."

"Cavity magnetron?"

"Yes. One gets rid of the grid in a vacuum tube, and controls current flow with an external magnetic field. That allows for the more powerful pulses. Your people will work it up in due course."

"No doubt. Got any cavity magnetrons for sale?"

Both Tillet and the scientist burst out laughing.

The group captain was peering at one of the scopes. "Hullo, looks like another circus heading this way. Forming up over Le Havre. A couple of dozen would you say, Stebbins?"

"Thirty-seven, sir."

Excitement thickened. A young duty officer wearing headphones strolled from scope to scope, making notes on a clipboard, talking to the operators. To Pug's eye this was smooth, expert work. "This is a major breakthrough," he said to Tillet.

"Well, we're grateful that a few Englishmen did stay awake while our politicians kicked away air parity and all the rest. Now, would you just as soon pop back to London?"

"I'm in your hands. If it were possible sometime I'd also like to visit Group Operations, Number 11 Fighter Group."

Tillet blinked. "Number 11? I believe we can lay it on."

OUTSIDE 10 Downing Street a single helmeted bobby paced in the morning sun. Remembering the grim arrays of SS men in front of Hitler's chancellery, Victor Henry smiled at this one unarmed Englishman guarding the Prime Minister's house. Tillet took him in and introduced him to a male secretary, who in turn led him up a wide stairway lined with portraits of former Prime Ministers.

Winston Churchill stood by the window of a small cluttered room that smelled of old books and dead cigars. He was very short and stooped, and he bulged in the middle like Tweedledum. With a word of welcome, he shook hands and motioned Pug to a seat. The big ruddy face looked severe and suspicious. He puffed at his cigar and slowly rumbled, "We're going to win, you know."

"I'm becoming convinced of that, Mr. Prime Minister," Victor Henry said, trying to control his nervousness.

Sitting down in an armchair, Churchill put on half-moon glasses and peered at the American captain. "Your President has sent you here to have a look at our RDF, a subject in which you have special knowledge. He reposes much confidence in your judgment." The faintly sarcastic tone suggested that Pug had been sent to see how the British were taking the German air onslaught; also, that Churchill did not mind the scrutiny a bit.

"Yes, sir. We call it radar."

"What do you think of my stuff, now that you've seen it?"

"The United States could use it."

Churchill uttered a pleased grunt. "Good! Now have a look at these." He passed Pug several charts showing destroyer and merchant-ship losses, the rate of new construction, and the rising graph of sinkings by U-boats. It was an alarming picture. Puffing clouds of smoke, Churchill said that the fifty old destroyers were the only fighting ships he would ever ask of the President. New

construction would fill the gap by March. It was a question of holding open the convoy lines and beating off invasion until then.

Churchill added—with a grin that reminded Pug of FDR—that some of the President's advisers feared that if the destroyer deal went through, Hitler might declare war on the United States.

"There's not much danger of that," Pug said.

"Not much *hope* of that!" Churchill's eyes looked impish. Victor Henry felt that the Prime Minister had paid him the compliment of stating his entire war policy in one wily joke.

"I should like you to tell your President," Churchill went on, "that now is the time to get to work on landing craft. We'll need them when we go back to France. We have got some fairly advanced designs, but we shall want a real Henry Ford effort."

Victor Henry couldn't help staring in wonder at this slumping, smoke-wreathed old man who, with almost no guns or tanks left after Dunkirk, with his back to the wall before a threatened invasion, was talking of invading Europe.

Churchill stared back, his broad lower lip thrust out. "Oh, I assure you we shall do it. Furthermore, we are prepared right now to bomb Berlin till the rubble jumps, if they dare bomb London. Should that occur while you're here, and if you don't consider it foolhardy nonsense, you might go along to see how it's done."

Pug thought it was extremely foolhardy nonsense, but he said at once, "I'd be honored, of course."

"Well, well. Probably out of the question. But it would be fun, wouldn't it?" Churchill pushed himself out of his chair, and Pug jumped up. The Prime Minister held out his hand. "Ask Tillet for all our stuff on landing craft. And remember—we shall require great *swarms* of the things!" Churchill swept his arms wide.

VICTOR Henry sat in the lobby of the Savoy Hotel, waiting for Pamela and her fighter pilot. Uniformed officers thronged past with young women in colorful summer finery. On the brink of being invaded by Hitler's hordes, England was the gayest place he had ever seen, and not because anyone was blind to the danger. The resolute, cheerful spirit of the people was borne out by a sharp rise in production figures. Now the problem was not so much

planes as fighter pilots, for combat was taking a steep toll of men.

"Here we are," chirruped Pamela, floating up in a mauve silk dress. Flight Lieutenant Gallard was short and swarthy; his thick black hair badly needed cutting, and his blue eyes were sunken with fatigue. They went to their table in the grillroom and ordered drinks. Gallard asked for an orange squash.

"Two dry martinis. One orange squash. *Very* good, sir," purred the silver-haired waiter.

Gallard gave Pug a grin. His fingers were beating a tattoo on the cloth. "That's the devil of an order isn't it, in the Savoy?"

"My son's a carrier pilot. I wish he'd go on orange squash."

"It's not a bad idea. This business up there"—Gallard raised a thumb—"happens fast. You've got to look sharp to see the other fellow before he sees you."

"There's a lot I'd like to ask you," Pug said. "But this is your night to forget about it."

Gallard glanced at Pamela. "Not a bit. Fire away."

"How good are they?"

"The Jerries are fine pilots and ruddy good shots."

"And their planes?"

"The Messerschmitt 109 is a fine machine, but the Spitfire's a good match for it. Their twin-engine 110 seems to handle very stiffly. The bombers of course are sitting ducks."

"How's RAF morale?"

Gallard lit a cigarette. "I'd say it's very high. But not the way the papers tell it—that dashing patriotic business. You're too damn busy trying not to get shot down yourself." His fingers never stopped dancing on the table. "The main thing is learning to live with fear. Some chaps simply can't. For accuracy, you've *got* to close the range. But nobody blames the chaps who blaze away from afar and abort the mission. After a while they're posted out."

"Your orange squash, sir," said the waiter.

"And just in time. I'm talking too much."

Pug raised his glass to Gallard. "Thanks. And good hunting."

Gallard grinned. "What does your son fly?"

"SBD, the Douglas Dauntless," said Pug.

Gallard nodded. "Dive bomber. The Jerries copied it from your

navy. Well, my hat's off to those carrier fellows, landing on a tiny, wobbly patch at sea. I come home to broad immovable Mother Earth, for whom I'm developing quite an affection."

"I have a rival," said Pamela. "I'm glad she's old and flat."

Gallard described the way fighter tactics were evolving on both sides. Pug wanted to remember as much as possible; he drank very little of the wine he had ordered. Pamela at last complained that she was drinking up the bottle by herself. "I'm tired of abstemious heroes," she said. "I shall find myself a cowardly sot."

Toward the end of the meal the headwaiter came to say that Gallard was wanted on the telephone, and Gallard excused himself. He returned in a few minutes and resumed eating.

"Pam, there's been a change," he said, when his plate was empty. "Rest is canceled." He smiled at Pug. "I don't mind. One gets fidgety, knowing the thing's still going on and one's out of it. I must be on my way now, but there's no reason for you not to go on to that Noel Coward show. I've heard it's very funny."

Quickly Pug said, "I think it's time for me to leave you both."

Gallard looked him straight in the eye. "Why? Couldn't you bear Pamela's drunken chatter for a little while longer? Don't go. Here she is all tarted up for the first time in weeks."

"All right," Pug said. "I think I can bear it."

The three stood up. Pamela said to Gallard, "We'll have a nice stroll alone through the lobby." She started off.

Ted Gallard offered Pug his hand. "I owe you thanks," he said. "Pamela came back to England because you advised her to."

"Really? Well, I'm flattered. I believe I was right. I'm sure her father's surviving nicely without her."

"Talky? He'll survive us all. Good luck to you, Captain Henry. Come and see us at Biggin Hill airfield."

To Pug the ominousness of Gallard's recall went far beyond the risk of sending up a fatigued, edgy pilot. It could signal that the RAF was coming to the end of its rope.

"MAYBE the Fat Boy's getting low on fighter pilots, too." General Tillet maneuvered his car through a cluster of taxicabs at Marble Arch. The hope, he said, in answer to Pug's fears, was that Göring

was already throwing everything in. If so, and if the British could hold on, there could come a crack in Luftwaffe performance. A sign of that might be a shift to terror bombing of the cities.

In about an hour they came to a compound of sooty buildings surrounded by a high wire fence. An airman at the gate saluted and let them pass. Pug said, "Where are we?"

"Uxbridge. You wanted to have a look at Group Operations, Number 11 Fighter Group."

"Oh, yes." In three weeks, he had never repeated the request.

They were met by a flight lieutenant who conducted them down a long turning stairway into the ground, then opened a door onto a balcony in a small strange theater. In place of stage and curtain stood a black wall with columns of electric bulbs. At the side of the wall was a list of RAF terms for stages of readiness. Below, twenty or so girls in uniform worked around a large-scale table map of southern England. And in glassed booths on either side of the room men with headphones scrawled at desks.

"Burne-Wilke, here's your American visitor," said Tillet.

The officer sitting in the middle of the balcony turned, smiling. "Hullo there! I was glad to hear you were coming. Here, sit by me. Nothing much doing yet, but Jerry's getting airborne now." Burne-Wilke gave Pug a quizzical glance. "Those airplanes you rounded up have proved most useful. Tell me, could you really have readied them in two days?"

Pug only grinned.

Burne-Wilke shook his head. "I was sorely tempted to take you up. But you might just have brought it off, and then we'd have looked proper fools. Hullo, there's a mutual friend. Didn't I first meet you with the Tudsburys in Washington?"

Pamela was walking in to take the place of another girl. She looked up, threw Pug a gentle smile, then got to work.

"This is all fairly clear, isn't it?" said Burne-Wilke, gesturing toward the wall. "Fighter Command at Stanmore is responsible for air defense, but each group runs its own show. Our beat is southeast England. Those six vertical banks of lights stand for our group's six fighter control stations. Each single column is one fighter squadron. All in all, twenty-five squadrons." He pointed

toward the bottom of the black wall, where white lights burned in a ragged pattern. "Going up the wall, you step up in readiness, till you get to AIRBORNE, ENEMY IN SIGHT, and ENGAGED. That's the red row. Our six substations talk to us and to the pilots, and we put together the whole picture— Oh, yes. Those poor devils under glass on the left collect reports about German planes from our ground observer corps, on the right from our anti-aircraft."

Pug had known of the system's existence; but this close view awed him. "Sir, when did all this spring into being?"

"Right after Munich. Hullo, Jerry's on his way. If things warm up enough, the air vice-marshal may come and run the show."

White lights were starting to jump upward. Burne-Wilke talked brisk RAF abracadabra into a telephone, his eyes moving from the wall to the map table. "Chain Home at Ventnor reports several attacks forming up. Two of them are forty-plus, one sixty-plus."

The lights kept moving up the board, and the air vice-marshal appeared. Nobody was excited, and the hum of voices was low.

The first lights that leaped to red were in the column of the Biggin Hill control station. Victor Henry saw Pamela glance up at them. On the table where she and the other girls were laying arrows and numbered disks, a clear picture was forming of four flights of attackers moving over southern England. Within twenty minutes, half the squadrons on the board were blinking red.

"We've got almost two hundred planes engaged," Burne-Wilke said. "The others stand by to cover when these land to refuel."

"Have you ever had red lights across the board?"

"Now and then. It's not the situation of choice."

Pug pictured Ted Gallard, cold sober on orange squash, darting and twisting at several hundred miles an hour, squirting his guns at an onrushing airplane with a black cross on it. Two of the Biggin Hill lights moved up to white: RETURNING BASE.

"These things seldom last longer than an hour or so from the time Jerry starts," said Burne-Wilke. "He runs dry rather fast."

Within a few minutes the red lights had all blinked off. The girls began clearing markers off the table. Burne-Wilke spoke on the telephone, collecting reports. He rubbed his reddened eyes, then turned to Pug. "Would you like to say hello to Pamela?"

"Very much. How did it go?"

"I'm afraid quite a few bombers got through. Both sides lost a number of planes, but the count takes a day or so to firm up."

The flight lieutenant led Pug to the surface. Pamela stood in the sun outside. "Well, you made it, but not on the best day. Ted's down." Her voice was calm, but the hand she gave him was icy.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. He may have parachuted, but one of his squadron mates reported that his plane dived into the sea." She clung to his hand, looking at him with glistening eyes. "I've asked for a special pass. Would you buy me dinner tonight?"

A WEEK passed, and another, and Gallard did not return. Pamela came several times to London. Once Pug remarked that she fought the war only when it suited her. "I am behaving shockingly," she said, "presuming on everybody's sympathy. I shall soon be confined to camp. By then you'll be gone. Meantime you're here."

To cheer her up, Pug took her often to Fred Fearing's apartment on Belgrave Square. Fearing, a celebrated American broadcaster, had been expelled from Germany for telling the truth about some bomb damage in Hamburg. Now he was having a marvelous time partying in London, and his broadcasts about England at war were stirring up much sympathy in the United States.

"Aren't you the sly one, Pug?" Fearing remarked. "She's small, but saucy."

"She's the daughter of a guy I know."

"Of course. Talky Tudsbury. My pal, too."

"Her fiancé's an RAF pilot, missing in action. Take it easy, Fearing." The other men who drifted in and out of the apartment left Pamela alone, assuming she was Victor Henry's doxy.

Once, early in September, when they were having a drink in her apartment and joking about this, Pug said, "Lechery, lechery; still, wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion."

"Bless me," she said, "you're a Shakespeare scholar, too. But there's precious little lechery around here. If people only knew."

"Are you complaining, my girl?"

"Certainly not, you leathery old gentleman."

At this point the air-raid sirens started their eerie wailing. They carried their drinks onto the little balcony outside her living room. "My God!" she said after a while. "This is *it*. Where on earth is Fighter Command?" Bombers in wide ragged V's were starkly visible in the late sunlight. Antiaircraft bursts among the formations seemed to be having no effect.

"Tangling with the fighter escort farther south, I'd guess." Victor Henry's voice shook. The mass of machines was coming on like the invaders in a futuristic movie, one V-wave after another, filling the air with a throbbing, angry hum. The muffled thunder of bomb hits boomed over the city, and flame and smoke began billowing up. "Looks like they're starting on the docks," Pug said.

"Shall I get you another drink? I *must* have one." She took his glass and soon returned with the drinks. "God help us, there's *more*." He put his arm around her and she leaned against him. So they stood together, watching the Luftwaffe start its effort to bomb London to its knees. It was the seventh of September.

Along the river more fires shot skyward, but elsewhere the flames were meager and dispersed. After the first shock, there was less terror in the sight. London was a very large city. It seemed that Göring's big try was not making much of a dent after all.

They went to dine in Soho after the all clear. On the sidewalks strangers talked to each other, laughed, and pointed thumbs up. Distant clangs of fire engines and a heavy smokiness overhead remained the only traces, in this part of town, of the Fat Boy's tremendous attempt.

But after dinner, when they walked in twilight down toward the Thames, the picture changed. They skirted roped-off streets full of noise and steam and shouting firemen, emerging finally on the riverbank. Here was an oppressive stench of burning. Reflections of the fires on the other bank flickered in the black water. From across a bridge came a swarm of shabbily dressed refugees.

Pug looked up at the sky. Above rifts in the smoke the stars shimmered. "It's a very clear night," he said. "These fires are a beacon they can see for a hundred miles. They may come back."

"I must get back to Uxbridge," Pamela said. She looked down at her flimsy gray dress. "But I seem to be out of uniform."

VICTOR HENRY watched the start of the night raid from Pam's balcony while she changed. When she came out into the gloomy moonlight in her WAAF uniform, she appeared to him the most desirable young female on God's earth. The severe garb made her small figure all the sweeter, he thought.

Again she leaned her shoulder to his. Again he held her with one encircling arm. "The bastards just can't miss," he said, "with those fires to guide them."

"Berlin can catch fire, too." Suddenly hate scored her face. "Oh God, they *got* one. Get more of them. Please." A tiny bomber came toppling down, burning like a candlewick, transfixed by two cross-
ing searchlights. And in short order two more fell.

The telephone rang. "Well!" She laughed harshly. "Uxbridge, no doubt, inviting me to a court-martial." But she returned after a moment, puzzled. "It seems to be for you."

It was General Tillet. "Ah, Henry," he said. "Your friend Fearing suggested I try you here. Do you recall that when you met a portly old gentleman a couple of weeks ago, he mentioned that you might want to go on a little expedition? To familiar foreign scenes?"

A tingle ran down Pug's spine. "I remember."

"Well, the trip seems to be on for tomorrow. I'm to meet you as soon as this nuisance stops, to give you the details— I say, you *are* interested? I have to pass your answer along within the hour."

"May I call you back?"

Tillet gave him a number. "Jolly good."

As he came out on the balcony, Pamela turned to him, her face alight. "They've got two more."

"Come inside a minute," Pug said. They sat in two armchairs near the open French windows. "Pamela, the RAF are going on a foreign expedition tomorrow night, and I'm invited along."

The girl's face went taut. "I see. Shall you go?"

"That's what I'm wondering."

"Decline," she said. "It's not your business and your chances of returning are not good. It's miserably unfair to your wife."

"Those were my first thoughts." Pug paused. Outside, the AA snapped and thumped, and searchlights swayed blue fingers across the blackness. He lit a cigarette. "Well, I'd better call back."

She said quickly, "What are you going to say?"

"I'm going to accept. My job is intelligence, Pam, and this is an extraordinary opportunity."

As he reached for the telephone Pam said, "I shall wind up with Fred Fearing." That stopped the motion of Pug's arm. She said, "I miss Ted horribly. I shall not be able to endure missing you. And I'm not at all moral. You have very wrong ideas about me."

The seams in his face were sharp and deep as he peered at the angry girl. "It isn't very moral to hit below the belt, I'll say that. But, Pam, I honestly don't think I was born to be shot down by the Luftwaffe in a British bomber. I'll see you when I get back."

He telephoned Tillet, while the girl stared at him with wide angry eyes. "Ass!" she said. "Ass!"

25

A YOUNGSTER in greasy coveralls poked his head through the open door. "Sir, the briefing's begun in B-flight crew room."

"Coming," said Pug, struggling with unfamiliar clasps and straps. The flying suit was too big and smelled of stale sweat. Quickly he thrust his feet into fleece-lined boots. "What do I do with this?" He gestured at the tweed suit he had folded on a chair.

"It'll be right there when you get back, sir."

Their eyes met. In that glance was complete mutual recognition that, for no very good reason, Pug was going out to risk death. Pug said, "What's your name?"

"Aircraftman Horton, sir."

"Well, Aircraftman Horton, we're about the same size. If I forget to pick that suit up or something, it's all yours."

"Why, thank you, sir. That's very fine tweed."

Several dozen aircrew slouched in the darkened room, where an aerial picture of Berlin was projected onto a large screen. Beside it stood the wing commander. He was using a long pointer to indicate the primary and secondary targets, a power plant and the main gasworks. Pug had walked or driven past them often.

"All right, let's have the opposition map." Onto the screen flashed another slide of Berlin, marked with red and orange sym-

bols, and the wing commander discussed antiaircraft positions and searchlight belts. "Berlin will be on the alert and the flak will be heavy, so look alive." He turned on the lights and changed to an offhand tone. "Incidentally, our American observer will be flying in *F for Freddie*. He's Admiral Victor Henry, one of the least prudent officers in the United States Navy."

Faces turned to Pug, who said, "Sir, maybe I'll be entitled to the field promotion when I get back, but I'm only Captain Henry."

The wing commander laughed. "The promotion stands for this mission. You deserve it!" He went out.

A skinny little man approached Pug, holding out his hand. "I'm Peters, sergeant navigator of *F for Freddie*." He gave Pug his parachute, showing him how to clip it to his chest, and a paper sack with his ration. "Just stow the chute where it'll be handy. It's hard enough moving around inside a Wellington without that thing on. Now you'll want to meet the pilots."

The two pilots were marking up maps of Berlin. Flight Lieutenant Killian, who had the neat little mustache of an assistant bank manager, gave Pug a friendly nod. Sergeant Pilot "Tiny" Johnson was a large fellow with a ham face. "Hullo!" he said. "Ruddy well brassed off, I am, Admiral. A nine-hour sweat just for us. While those twerps in all the other squadrons go for a quick one on the Channel coast to hit Hitler's invasion barges, and then home for tea, Mother." He headed for the door.

"Tiny's a good pilot," said Killian in upper-class tones, as he led Pug outside. "He does talk a lot."

The first pilot went aboard the plane. The crew lounged on the grass nearby. "*F for Freddie*," said the sergeant pilot, giving the fuselage a loud affectionate slap. From the sound of the slap Pug realized that a Wellington bomber had a skin of fabric. He was used to metal aircraft. It had never occurred to him that fabric planes could be used as attack bombers.

Far down the field, one plane after another coughed and began to roar, shooting out flames in the darkness. A truck rolled up to *F for Freddie* and a cable was plugged into its fuselage. The motors turned over, spitting fire, as the other planes thundered up the dimly lit runway. Soon only *F for Freddie* was left, its engines

glowing red. All at once the engines shut off. Mechanics came trotting out and worked rapidly on one engine. Twenty minutes after the other planes, *F for Freddie* took off for the North Sea.

After what seemed an age of bumping through cold air, Pug glanced at his watch. Seven minutes had gone by. The intercom crackled and buzzed in his helmet, but once the plane left the coast on course, the pilots and navigator shut up. Pug's perspiration from the heavy suit cooled and dried, chilling him. Twenty minutes later, Killian gestured to him to look through the plexiglass blister where the navigator had been taking star sights. There was nothing to see but black water, bright moon, and stars.

Pug had imagined a long-range bomber would have ample room. In fact, four men sat crowded within inches of each other—the two pilots, the front gunner, and the navigator. Stumbling, crouching, Pug dragged himself and his parachute down the black fuselage to the bubble where the young rear gunner sat. The boy gave him a thumbs-up and a pathetic smile; it was his first operational flight. This was a hell of a lonely, shaky, frigid place to be, Pug thought. He groped to a clear space, squatted on his parachute, and dozed.

Garbled voices woke him. He was shivering with cold. Someone tugged him toward the cockpit. Suddenly it was bright as day. The plane dived and Pug fell, bruising his forehead. Kneeling up, he saw the bright light go out, come on, and go out again. The plane made sickening turns as he crawled forward.

Tiny Johnson, gripping the controls, said in the intercom, "Okay, Admiral? Just passing the coast searchlight belt." He waved at a fixture labeled OXYGEN. "Plug in, and come and see."

Sucking on rubber-tasting enriched air, Pug crawled into the bomb-aimer's position in the nose. Beneath he saw gray, moonlit land. The searchlight beams waved behind them. From below, red and orange balls floated up, speeding as they rose. A few burst and showered red streaks and sparks. Tiny said, "Coast flak."

Just then something painfully brilliant exploded in Victor Henry's face. Blackness ensued, then a dance of green circles.

A hand grasped his. Peters' voice said, "Magnesium flash shell, sir. Ruddy close. You all right?"

"I can't see."

"It'll take a while. Sit up, sir."

The plane ground ahead, the blindness persisted, then the green circles jerked in a red mist and a picture gradually faded in: faces lit by dials, and the nose gunner in the moonlight. The navigator spoke. "Should be seeing searchlights ahead now."

"Nothing," said Flight Lieutenant Killian. "Black night."

"I've got Berlin bearing dead ahead, sir."

"Something's wrong. It looks like a solid forest down there."

The piping voice of Reynolds, the rear gunner, broke in to report searchlights far astern. After some crisp talk, Killian swung around and headed for them. "*That's* Berlin," he soon said, pointing. "All kinds of fireworks. Well done, Reynolds."

As they neared Berlin, the nose gunner was silhouetted by exploding balls and streaks of color, and fanning rays of light. Tiny rasped, "The poor bastards who got there first are catching it."

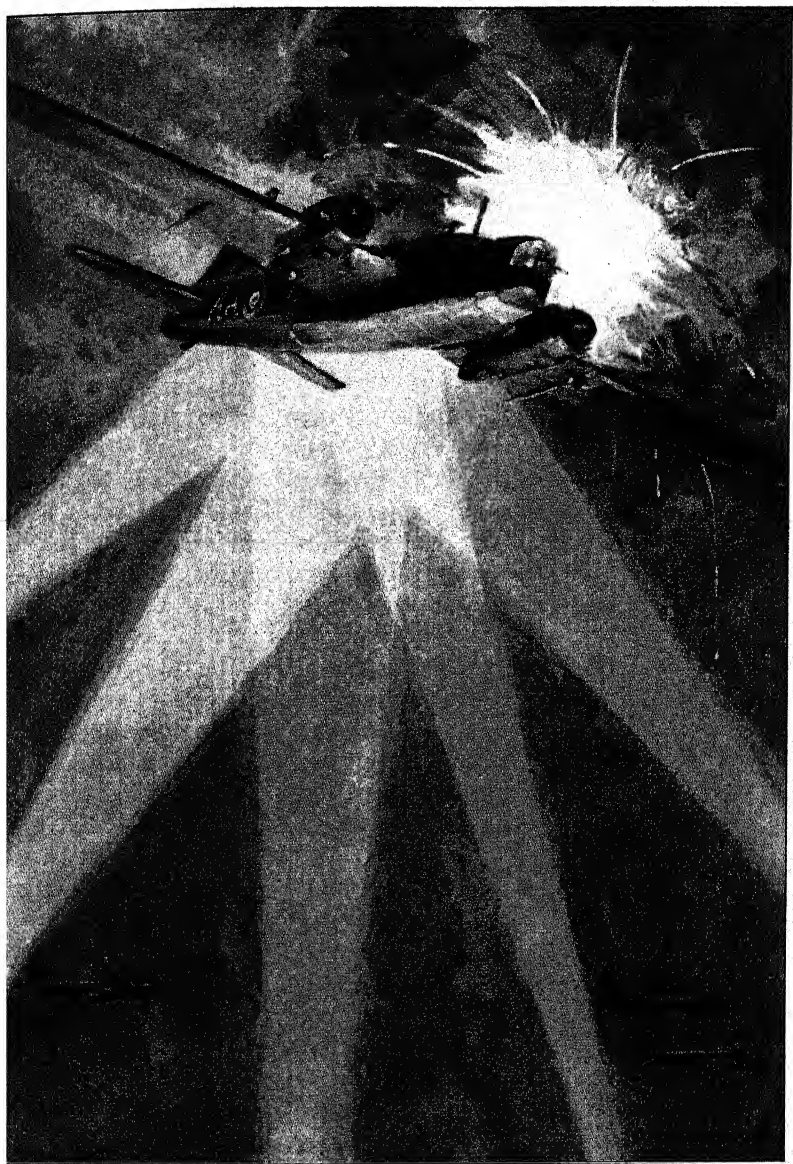
Killian's voice came, easy and slow: "It looks worse than it is. The stuff spreads apart once you're in it. The sky's a roomy place."

F for Freddie went sailing into the beautiful, terrible display, and as the captain had said, it thinned out, leaving great holes of darkness through which the plane bored smoothly ahead. "See that fire, Admiral?" Killian pointed. "Some other chaps have pretty well clobbered the primary target, so I'm going for secondary."

Shortly thereafter the motor noise ceased. The plane nosed down. The sudden quiet was a big surprise. "Gliding approach," said Killian. "They control their lights and flak with listening devices. Navigator's got to take your place now."

As the plane whiffled earthward, Pug made his way to the rear gunner, who was looking down at the city with saucer eyes. Killian ordered, "Bomb doors open." There was a rush of icy air and a roar. The navigator was talking in a drilled cheerful tone: "*Left, left . . . too much . . . right . . . dead on. Bombs gone.*"

Pug saw the bombs fall away, a string of black tumbling sticks. The airplane slanted up, the motors bellowed on, and they climbed. Below, a string of small red explosions appeared beside the huge gas-storage tower. Pug thought the bombs had missed. Then in the blink of an eye came a blasting and billowing up from the



ground, almost to the height of the plane. In the gigantic yellow flare, Berlin was spread out like a picture postcard—the Kurfürstendamm, Unter den Linden, the Brandenburg Gate, the river, the chancellery, the Opera House—clear, sharp, close.

The cheers in the intercom hurt his ears. He seized his microphone and gave a rebel yell. As he did so, *F for Freddie* was transfixed by half a dozen searchlights. In the rear gunner's bubble all was blue radiance. The boy looked horror-stricken at Pug and suddenly started to scream into his microphone. The plane lurched, dived, sideslipped, but the shining blue pyramid of searchlights stayed locked under it. Pug threw his arms around the gun mount to steady himself. The gunner fell against the mount, knocking the microphone away from his open mouth, and his clamor ceased in the intercom. A mass of orange and red balls lazily left the ground and floated up directly at *F for Freddie*, bursting all around in a shower of fire. Pug felt a hard thump, heard the motor change sound, heard a fearful whistling. Icy air blasted at him. Fragments rattled all over the plane, and *F for Freddie* heeled over in a steep, shuddering dive. Through the frail plexiglass bubble Pug stared at the fabric wings, waiting for them to break off, flutter away, and signal the end of his life.

All at once the blue pyramid turned black. The dizzying swoops stopped, the plane flew straight. Pug caught a whiff of vomit. The gunner had fainted and the puke was dribbling down his chest. Out of the left leg of his flying suit black blood welled.

Pug tried the intercom, but it was dead. He stumbled forward and ran into Peters. Pug shouted that Reynolds was wounded, and moved on to the cockpit, passing a ragged hole in the starboard fuselage through which he could see the stars. Mechanically he noted the Dipper. They were heading west, back to England.

In the cockpit the pilots sat as before, busy at their controls. Tiny shouted, "Ah, Admiral. We're going home to tea. You'll tell them you saw that gas plant go up, won't you?"

"Damn right I will. How's the airplane?"

"The port engine was hit, but it's still pulling. Heading back overland, in case we have to come down. Looks like we can make it, unless that engine completely packs up."

PAMELA HAD STAYED in London. She knew enough about bombing missions to calculate when Pug would get back. At ten in the morning she went to his flat and persuaded the charwoman to let her in. She sat in the living room praying he was alive.

Deposited in schools by her divorced parents, Pam had grown up almost wild, and had had several love affairs before she was out of her teens. In her early twenties she had met Philip Rule, a corrupt, ice-cold man with clever talk and beguiling ways, who would have destroyed her had she not broken with him at last and gone to work as her father's secretary. As such, she had encountered Commander Henry on the *Bremen*, and she had found him attractive from the start. In Berlin and in Washington she had liked him more and more, and had sensed that it was mutual.

When Victor Henry had arrived in London two weeks ago, Pamela had been quite ready to marry the fighter pilot, and Pug's visit had not changed that. But since then Gallard had vanished. In wartime, relationships deepen fast and Pamela now thought that, whatever the moral scruples of this very married man, she could get around them if she pleased.

As Pug let himself in, he could hear the twelve-o'clock news echoing in the flat. He called, "Hello, who's here?"

Steps clicked. The girl struck him like a blue projectile.

"What the devil?" Victor Henry managed to say between kisses. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm absent without leave. I shall be court-martialed and shot. I'd have sat here for a week." She kissed him again and again.

Dead on his feet as he was, Pug nevertheless began on instinct to respond to this eager, aroused girl clinging to him. "The conquering hero's reward, hey?" he said hoarsely.

She leaned back in his arms, looking at him. "Just so."

"Well, I didn't do a damned thing except get in everybody's way. However, thank you, Pam. You're beautiful and sweet, and this welcome makes me feel great."

His evident exhaustion, his comical indecisiveness about what to do next, caused a wave of deep tenderness to go through her. "You look absolutely drained," she said, stepping free. "Want a drink? Some food?"

"A drink, I guess. But I'd better get some sleep."

"So I figured." He found his bed turned down, his pajamas laid out. When she took his drink in to him, he was asleep.

THE HAND on his shoulder was gently persistent. "Captain Henry! You've had a call from the embassy."

It took him a few seconds to recollect where he was, and why Pamela Tudsbury was standing over him in uniform. In his dream he had been back in *F for Freddie*. He sat up and sniffed a delicious odor of broiling meat. "What's that?"

"I thought you'd be hungry by now. It's five o'clock. Captain Vance insisted that you be at the embassy by six thirty."

As he showered and dressed, he was still stumbling through dreams. He could not get used to the wonder of being alive. A recollection of Pamela's ardent welcome added to that wonder.

"How did you get all this?" he said, when he entered the living room. The salad, the fruit, the long bread, and the bottle of red wine made an attractive clutter on the small table.

Pam was coming in from the kitchen with steaks on two plates. "Oh, I'm a London alley cat. I know where to forage."

Pug attacked the meat and the crusty bread with gusto. "Why, it's the best meal I've ever eaten."

"You exaggerate, but I'm glad. I'm trying to make up for the stupid way I acted before you left."

"Pam, I'm glad I went. It was the right decision."

"Oh, no argument, now that you're back." She was looking at him over her wineglass. "Do you know that I fell for you on the *Bremen*? Did you guess it in Berlin? I'd have tried my luck—only it was impossible. You're so devoted to your wife."

"Yes indeed," Pug said. "Rock of Gibraltar. I guess I'm dumb, but I hadn't the slightest notion."

"Well, it's true. It did me good to be able to like a man so much. I proceeded to go mad over Ted, shortly thereafter." A shadow of sadness flickered across her face. "When you opened the door a few hours ago, I came close to believing in God."

He reached out and took her slim wrist. "Pam, I've developed a high regard for a London alley cat, myself."

"I'm glad. I should be sorry to think my passion was totally unrequited. It's getting on for six o'clock, Captain Henry."

"What will you do? Go back to Uxbridge?"

"What will *you* do? Shall I wait for your call at my flat?"

"Yes, Pam. Please do that."

THE AMERICAN flag flying from the embassy in Grosvenor Square struck Pug with a pang of pride. Its slow waving seemed so full of majesty that a sixty-piece orchestra might have been playing "The Star-Spangled Banner." He sat on a park bench to look at it, suffused with zest and a burning wish to live a long time yet in this radiant world. He felt reborn. Nothing like this had happened to him in twenty-five years, and he had not expected it ever to happen again. But he had fallen in love.

A black Cadillac pulled up at the embassy door and discharged Blinker Vance, two army generals, and Admiral Benton, Pug's old boss at War Plans. Pug hastened across the street.

"Hey, Pug!" Benton offered a fat hand. "This is General Anderson, and General Fitzgerald here is army air corps."

Vance left the four men in a quiet conference room. "Now damn it, Pug," Admiral Benton began, "the ambassador says if he'd known about this blamed fool flight of yours he'd have stopped you. He's dead right. We don't want to give the army and its air corps"—he gestured at the other men—"the idea that the navy trains goofy daredevils." Benton sounded very pleased.

Fitzgerald said, "I'd like to hear about that bomber ride."

"So would I," said Anderson.

Pug narrated his adventure in a matter-of-fact way. All three officers listened tensely as he described the return trip in a damaged aircraft; the jettisoning of all removable weight to maintain altitude; the final thirty miles flown at a few hundred feet.

"Quite a yarn, Captain," Anderson said. "It amounted to a token bombing though, didn't it, after what the Germans have done to the docks here? At this rate, in a week London will cease to be a port. Then what happens? Famine? Plague?"

"Things look worse than they are, General. Their repair and fire-fighting crews are good."

"We've heard, Captain Henry," put in Fitzgerald, "that you've been sending optimistic reports to the President recommending all-out assistance."

"Not wholly optimistic, sir, but yes."

"Well," said Anderson, "possibly you're out of touch with how the people back home already feel about Roosevelt's aid to the British. Now, we're going on to a dinner at the Army and Navy Club with some British generals and admirals. We have the list of the war matériel they want. It would strip our armed forces clean. We have to cable recommendations to the President within five days. He's already let them have—in addition to fifty warships—several squadrons of naval aircraft, half a million rifles—"

"He hasn't given 'em away, General," Benton observed. "The Limeys have paid cash on the barrelhead."

"Yes, luckily the Neutrality Act compels that, but it was a god-damned lie to call the stuff surplus. We don't have any surplus! And now Congress is passing a draft law. Our boys will be drilling with broomsticks! There's going to be an accounting one day."

Admiral Benton said, "Well, Pug, I've told these gentlemen that any dope you put out is reliable. What makes you think the British will keep fighting, after the way the French folded?"

Tersely, Pug described the British scientific advances, the strength of their battle fleet, their fighter control system, the aircraft production figures, the German versus British losses, the morale of the fliers, the preparations along the invasion beaches, the Chain Home stations. Anderson regarded him through half-shut eyes. "Very well. Suppose the British do hold out? What can they do against a man who controls all Europe?"

"Actually, General, I think the idea is to hang on till we get in."

"Now you're talking," Anderson turned to the admiral. "Well, I'll say this, your man makes out a case." He rose. "Let's be on our way, gentlemen."

"I'll be right along," Benton said. When the army men were gone he slapped Pug's shoulder. "Well done. These Limeys are holding the fort for us. We've got to help 'em. And since that's what the boss wants, we will. Say, that reminds me—" He brought out two letters. One was in a White House envelope, the other

was from Rhoda. Pug slipped them both into his pocket, and he and Benton followed the others out.

When Blinker Vance met Pug in the hall, he handed him a dispatch from BuPers: RETURN BERLIN UNTIL RELIEVED ON OR ABOUT 1 NOVEMBER X THEREUPON PROCEED WASHINGTON HIGHEST AIR PRIORITY X REPORT BUPERS FOR FURTHER REASSIGNMENT.

Victor Henry went back to the bench in Grosvenor Square. The sun still shone, the flag still waved. But the strange exaltation was gone. He read the President's penciled scrawl:

Your bracing reports have been a grand tonic that I needed. Thank you especially for alerting us on British advanced radar. They are sending over a scientific mission this month, with all their "wizard war" stuff, as Churchill calls it. There's something heartwarming about his interest in landing craft, isn't there? Actually he's right, and I've asked for a report from CNO. Get as much of their material as you can.

Rhoda's letter was strange. She had just turned on the radio, she wrote, heard a tune they had danced to on their honeymoon, and burst out crying. She reminisced about his long absence in 1918, about their good times in Manila. With Palmer Kirby, who now kept an office in New York, she had just driven up to New London to visit Byron—a glorious trip through Connecticut. Red Tully had told her that Byron was lazy in written work, but very good in the simulator and in drills. She went on:

Did you know Janice is pregnant? Those kids didn't waste much time, hey? Like father like son! But the thought of being a GRAND-MOTHER!!! I'm happy, but it sure threw me into a spin.

Let me give you a piece of advice. The sooner you can come home, the better. I'm all right, but I could use a *husband* around.

He walked to his flat and telephoned Pamela.

"Oh, my dear," she said, "I'm so glad you called. I talked to Uxbridge. They're being very broadminded. If I come back tonight, all is forgiven. I must really go back right away."

"Of course. You're lucky not to get shot for desertion," Pug said, as lightly as he could. He added, "I'm ever so grateful to you."

"You're grateful?" she said. "Oh, God, don't you know what you've done for me? Can I see you next week?"

"Pam, I have to leave day after tomorrow. To Berlin for maybe six weeks, then home. Hello? Pamela?"

"I'm still here. You wouldn't want me to desert for two more days and take what comes. Would you? I'll do it."

"It's no way to win a war, Pam."

"No, it isn't, Captain. Well. Good-by it is."

"Our paths will cross again."

"Oh, no doubt. But I firmly believe that Ted's coming back. I may be a wife next time we meet, which will be easier all around. All the same, today was one of the happiest of my life."

Victor Henry was finding it difficult to go on talking. The sad, kind tones of this young voice he loved were choking his throat. "I'll never forget, Pamela, not one minute of it. Good-by."

Fatigued but tense, he went to bed. Restless, he turned on the BBC and listened to a Churchill speech. Still unable to sleep, he reread Rhoda's nostalgic, sentimental, and troubled letter. Something shadowy and unpleasant was there between the lines.

WAR not only forces intense new relationships; it puts old ones to the breaking stress. On the way back from Connecticut, Rhoda had slept with Palmer Kirby. That was the shadowy thing Pug had discerned in her letter; but although her words had been incautious, the thought of infidelity had not crossed his mind.

Rhoda's downfall had been unforeseen. She and Kirby had stopped for tea at a little tourist house overlooking a charming pond where swans moved among lily pads. They intended to halt for an hour, then drive on to New York. They talked of Berlin, of their delight at seeing each other in the Waldorf. Time flowed by, their tones grew more intimate. Then Palmer Kirby said, "How wonderfully cozy this place is! Too bad we can't stay here."

And Rhoda Henry murmured, hardly believing what she heard herself say, "Maybe we could."

They were given a room, no questions asked. Everything that followed left Rhoda throbbing with pleasure. Like a declaration of war, that point in time drew a line across the past and started

another era. And yet Rhoda felt she had not really changed. She even still loved her husband. She was trying to digest all this puzzlement when she wrote to him.

In New York, Rhoda and Kirby heard in afternoon sunshine the Churchill broadcast which Pug had listened to at night. The apartment Rhoda had chosen for Madeline and herself was spacious and cheerful. Kirby slouched in an armchair, puffing at his pipe. "Marvelous phrasemaker, that Churchill," he said.

"Do you think they'll actually hold off the Germans?"

"What does Pug say?"

"He wrote a pessimistic letter when he first arrived there. He hasn't written again. I tell myself if anything had happened to him I'd have heard. I do worry."

"Naturally." Kirby glanced at his watch.

"When does your plane go?"

"Oh, not for a couple of hours."

"How long will you be in Denver?"

"Only overnight. Then to Washington. Our board's going to meet with some British scientists. They've got some remarkable stuff. Haven't you got a good reason to go to Washington?"

"Oh, dear, Palmer, don't you realize I know everybody in that town? And anybody I don't, Pug does."

He said after a glum pause, "It's not very satisfactory, is it? I don't see myself as a home wrecker."

"Look, dear, I don't see myself as a scarlet woman. I've been to church since, and I don't feel guilty. It must be the war. With London burning to the ground, all the old ideas seem trivial."

"I didn't tell you why I'm going to Denver. There's a buyer for my house."

"Your house sounds heavenly. Do you really want to sell it?"

"I rattle around in it. It is perfect to entertain in, to have my children and grandchildren come to. If I had a wife, I wouldn't sell it." He looked at her with worried shyness. The look was itself a proposal of marriage. "What do you think, Rhoda?"

"Oh, Palmer! Oh, heavenly days." Rhoda's eyes brimmed. This resolved the puzzlement. It had not been a crazy slip, after all, but a grand passion. Grand passions were different.

"It can't be news to you. We wouldn't have stayed in Connecticut if I hadn't felt this way."

"Well! Oh, my Lord. I'm proud and happy. Of course I am. But—*Palmer!*" She swept her hand, almost gaily, at photographs of Pug and her sons on the piano.

He said earnestly, "Pug is an admirable man. But there had to have been a rift in your marriage or this wouldn't have happened."

In a very shaky voice, Rhoda said, "Before I knew him, Pug was a navy fullback. I saw him play in two Army-Navy games—he was an aggressive, exciting player. And then, my stars, he burst on me in Washington, the actual Pug Henry, whose picture had been in the papers. Well, great heavens, he courted the way he played football. The boys I went with were just from the old Washington crowd, and Pug was something altogether unusual and wonderful, still is. And I know he loves me, but—he is so Navy! Oh dear, now, for the very first time, I suddenly feel very, very wretched." Rhoda cried into her handkerchief, her shoulders shaking.

When she calmed down, she said, "You go along to Denver, but ask yourself this. Wouldn't you always be thinking that I'd do to you what I've done to Pug? Of course you would. Why not?"

"Because I believe you've been out of love with your husband for a long time. You feel affection for him. I think you're in love with me." He stood. "I'm off to Denver, Rhoda. But I don't think I'll sell the house."

"Oh, sell it, as far as I'm concerned! I only think you yourself might regret it one day." She walked with him to the door, and he kissed her like a husband going off on a trip.

26

SEPTEMBER was crisping the Berlin air when Pug flew back there via Lisbon. Compared with London under the blitz, the city looked at peace, although the air war did show a few traces. Pug tried to see the wrecked gasworks, but the area was cordoned off. The evidence of Göring's shortcomings was off limits. This mindless shutting out of unpleasant facts was prevalent in Berlin now.

One German who seemed to retain some common sense amid

the Nazi delirium was Ernst Grobke. Shortly after Pug's return the submariner invited him to lunch, and at the restaurant table griped openly about the way Göring had botched the Battle of Britain. "We'll win, though," he said. "Our new, improved U-boats will be coming off the ways next January. Then half a million tons of British shipping sunk a month, and *phfff!*—Churchill kaput."

"Well! Ernst Grobke and Victor Henry! The two sea dogs, deciding the war." The banker Wolf Stöller was bowing over them. "Victor, that is a beautiful new suit. Savile Row?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact."

"Unmistakable. Well, it will be a pleasure to order clothes there again. Ernst, did you tell Captain Henry you're coming to Abendruh this weekend? Why don't you come too, Victor? There'll be just two or three other fellows. And some lovely ladies."

Under Pug's quick glance Grobke smiled unnaturally. It was clear to Pug now why Grobke had arranged the lunch. "All right," he said. "Thank you very much."

"Grand. See you on Friday," said the banker.

That same afternoon, Victor Henry's yeoman rang him and said Natalie Jastrow was on the line from Siena.

"Jehosephat! Put her on. . . . Natalie?"

"Oh, *hello!* Is Byron all right?"

"He's fine."

"Oh, what a relief! I haven't had a single letter from him since I left. I sent a cable and got no answer. I know how impossible the mail is, but I'd begun to worry."

"Natalie, he wrote me that he's had no letters from you. And I'm sure he didn't get your cable. But he's in good shape."

"Why, I've been writing once a week. I miss him so. How's he doing in submarine school?"

"Scraping by, I gather."

Natalie's laugh stirred an ache in him. It was husky and slightly mocking, like Pamela's. "That sounds right."

"Natalie, he expected you back before this."

"I know. There've been problems. Be sure to tell him I'm fine. Maybe a letter from you will get through."

"It will. I'll write today."

IT WAS A SMALL GATHERING at Abendruh—no staircase slide. The other men were a Luftwaffe general and a high official in the Foreign Ministry, company far above Grobke, who obviously felt ill at ease. The five pretty ladies were not wives.

Pug sized it all up as an orgy in the making, to get him to talk about the British. So he was surprised when after dinner they went to a music room, where Stöller, the general, the Foreign Ministry man, and a redheaded lady formed a string quartet. They played the best amateur music Pug had ever heard. Grobke was clearly bored; he sat drinking a lot of brandy and stifling yawns. After a couple of hours the ladies said good night and left.

"Perhaps we might have a nightcap on the terrace," said the banker, putting his violin in its case. The five men moved outside and a butler passed drinks. "Victor, if you care to talk about England," said Stöller, "we would of course be interested."

"You mean I have to admit I've been to England?"

The banker laughed. "Unless you want to get our intelligence people in bad trouble. If you prefer, we'll drop the subject. But you're in an unusual position, having been in both capitals."

"Well, if you want me to say you've shot the RAF out of the sky, it might be better to drop it now."

The general said gloomily, "We know we haven't done that."

"Speak freely. General Jagow is my oldest friend," said Stöller. "We were schoolboys together. And Dr. Meusse"—he waved at the Foreign Ministry man—"goes back almost that far."

"We say in the Luftwaffe," put in the general, "'The red flag is up.' That means we all talk straight. We say what we think about the Führer, Göring, anybody."

"I like those ground rules," Pug said. "Fire away."

"Would an invasion succeed?" spoke up Dr. Meusse.

"Can your navy get you across?" Pug replied.

"Why not?" said Jagow. "Through a corridor protected by mine belts and U-boats, and under a Luftwaffe umbrella."

Pug glanced at Grobke. "Here's a U-boat man. Ask him."

Grobke said in thick tones, "Very difficult, possibly suicidal."

The general leaned toward him, stiff with anger. "Red flag's up," Pug exclaimed. "I agree with him. Part of a landing force might get

through—not saying in what shape. There's still those invasion beaches, which I've seen close on and would hate to approach from seaward."

"What is the bombing of London doing to the British morale?" Stöller asked.

"You're making Churchill's job easier. They're fighting mad now, and they think they're going to win."

"There is the weakness," said Dr. Meusse. "When a people loses touch with reality, it is finished."

Stöller lit a cigar. "Absolutely. The course of this war is fixed. England's shipping is disappearing faster than she can replace it. She will soon run out of fuel and food. When that happens, Churchill will fall. There's no way out."

Pug said, "Isn't there? My country has a lot of fuel, food—and steel and shipyards too—and we're open for business."

The banker smiled coldly. "But your Neutrality Act requires that England pay cash. Well, she started the war with about five billions in foreign exchange. Our intelligence is that she's already spent more than four. The planes and supplies and ships she needs right now to keep going will wipe out the last billion or so. By December the British Empire will be broke."

Dr. Meusse put in, "We are sinking ships now at a rate we never reached until the best months of 1917. Do you know that?"

"I do," said Captain Henry. "And that's when we came in."

The silence on the terrace lasted a long time.

The rest of the weekend proved cold, dull, rainy, and—for Pug—very heavy on music and culture. There was no effort to pump hard intelligence out of him. The five ladies, all in their thirties, were available for conversation, for dancing, and, Pug assumed, for the night, too. He had trouble telling them apart.

Before he left, Stöller said to him, "General Jagow appreciated your willingness to talk about England. Most friendly of you."

"I haven't revealed anything. Not intentionally."

Stöller smiled. "We are all struck by your sense of honor. If there's anything Jagow could do for you, I know it would give him pleasure. Installations, perhaps, that you'd care to visit?"

"There is one thing, a little unusual. An RAF pilot, who's en-

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gaged to the daughter of a friend of mine, went down in the Channel several weeks ago. Your people might have picked him up."

"That should be simple to find out. Give Jagow his name and rank. If he is a prisoner, you might be able to visit him."

WOLF Stöller called him early in October. "Your man is alive. He is in France, in a hospital in Lille, but in good condition. General Jagow invites you, as his personal guest, to visit Luftwaffe headquarters close by. You are invited as a friend, not as an American attaché. No reciprocity is necessary."

After a moment Pug said, "Well, that's good news. The general is mighty kind. I'll call you back."

When Pug discussed the offer with the chargé d'affaires, they agreed that the Luftwaffe would want something in return. But the visit would provide intelligence opportunities worth chancing this.

He went to Lille by train. Rail travel was surprisingly back to normal in German-ruled Europe. The train left on time and roared through the flat autumn landscapes of Germany, Belgium, and northern France. In the restaurant car, amiably chatting Germans, Frenchmen, Belgians wine and dined amid rich good smells and a cheery clatter. By right of the ability to run things, the Third Reich looked a good bet to last a thousand years.

An emissary of General Jagow, a thin, rigid lieutenant, drove Pug to a grimy stone hospital building in the middle of Lille and left him in a windowless office containing a desk, two chairs, and the loudest-ticking wall clock Pug had ever heard.

Soon the door opened again, and a German soldier with a sub-machine gun tramped in. Ted Gallard followed, his flying suit ripped, his right arm in a sling, his face discolored and bandaged. Behind him came the thin lieutenant.

"Hello, Ted," said Victor Henry.

"Hello there!" said Gallard, with a look of extreme surprise.

In precise German the lieutenant told Pug that he would now withdraw, but since British airmen were honor bound to seize every chance to escape, General Jagow could not omit the precaution of an armed guard. The soldier knew no English. He would not interfere, but he was instructed to shoot at the first move to

escape. They should avoid any gestures that might confuse him. "When you are through, kindly raise the telephone. I will then return. The general hopes you will join him for lunch."

As the door closed, Pug lit a cigarette and gave it to the pilot.

"Ah! God bless you." Gallard inhaled deeply. "Does Pam know?"

"One of your mates saw you jump. She's sure you're alive."

"Good. Now you can tell her."

"That'll be a rare pleasure."

The wall clock ticked very loudly. Flicking the cigarette clumsily with his left hand, Gallard glanced at the guard with his slanting machine gun. "Puts a bit of a chill on the small talk, eh? But I must say, this is the surprise of my life. I thought I was in for a rough grilling. They didn't tell me you were here."

"What do you want me to tell Pamela? I'm going back to Washington shortly, but I can wire or write her."

"First, that I'm all right, more or less. I can't fault the medical attention. The food's been bloody awful—until the other day it mysteriously improved. Just in my ward. I suppose that was because of your visit. Tell me about Pam. When did you last see her?"

"I've seen her several times. She'd come to London and I'd take her to dinner. For a while she was peaky and wouldn't eat. But she was coming around. Practically the last thing she told me was that she expected you back and was going to marry you."

The pilot's eyes grew moist. "She's a marvelous girl, Pamela." He looked at the guard, who was giving off an unwashed smell in the close room. "He does smell, doesn't he? And that face! Eighty million docile, dangerous swine like this." There was not a flicker in the soldier's eyes. "I really don't think he understands English."

"Don't count on it," said Pug, dry and fast.

"All right. But what's really happening in the war? The Hun doctors say it's practically over. Of course that's a lie."

Pug made his account as cheerful as possible. The pilot nodded and brightened. "That's more like it. Ruddy idiotic that you'll walk out of here to lunch with a Luftwaffe general, and I'll still be a prisoner. I suppose you'd better be cracking off."

"Take some cigarettes. I'd give you the pack, but Rosebud might think it was funny business and get confused."

"Ha! Rosebud is good." Gallard pulled out several cigarettes. "Look here, I don't know how you've managed this, but thank you! It's helped more than you can guess. Tell Pam I'll be seeing her." His firm tone implied an intention to escape.

"Be careful, Ted."

"Trust me. I've got a lot to live for."

THE OFFICE in Wolf Stöller's bank was small but richly furnished. A blaze of paintings crowded the walls, and Pug recognized two Picassos and a Renoir. "So, you go so soon," Stöller said, gesturing to a maroon leather couch. "Did you expect this?"

"Well, I thought my relief would be along in a couple of weeks. But when I got back from Lille, here he was, waiting."

"Of course you are anxious to be reunited with your very beautiful wife. What do you say to a glass of sherry?"

"That'll be fine. Thanks."

"I daresay you won't drink to the victory of Germany?"

With a tart grin Pug said, "We're neutral, you know."

"Ah, Victor, if only you were! Well, to an honorable peace?"

"Sure. To an honorable peace."

They drank. The banker settled in an armchair and lit a long cigar. "Your little trip to Lille was a success, hm?"

"Yes, I'm obliged to you and the general."

"Please. By the ordinary rules, such a trip would be impossible. Among men of honor there are special rules." Stöller sighed. "Well, Victor, I didn't ask you here just to offer you sherry."

"I didn't suppose so."

"As a military man you know there are special conversations that sometimes have to be forgotten, obliterated without a trace."

Intensely curious, Victor Henry could not imagine what might be coming next. His best guess was a secondhand peace feeler from Göring to convey to the President.

"You had a conversation with General Jagow about the tragic absurdity of this conflict between Germany and England."

Pug nodded. Over lunch at his headquarters Jagow had treated him to a cloudy, high-flown discourse. The general foresaw a new golden age, with America allied to a modernized Europe made

orderly by Germany. To this end the United States must do all it could to prevent a war to the death between Germany and England. Germany, he had concluded, needed friends in America, to explain that the only long-term alternatives were an alliance in the west or world domination by Asiatic bolshevism.

"Did his ideas make sense to you? You do agree that expectation of American help is what is keeping England in the war? That is what stands between disaster for the whole western world and an honorable peace—which you and I just drank to."

Pug took a few moments to answer. "Maybe, but what's an honorable peace? Churchill and Hitler would want to depose each other, and both of them really represent the national will."

"You are going back to serve as naval aide to Mr. Roosevelt?"

Pug's face registered no surprise. "I'm going back to the Bureau of Personnel for reassignment."

The banker's smile was tolerant. "Well, our intelligence usually gets these things right. Please listen to what I have to say. Between men of honor there is a spiritual kinship. With you, Jagow and I have felt that kinship. You have been impeccably correct, but unlike so many people at your embassy, you don't regard Germans as cannibals. It has been noticed, I assure you.

"Now, you know of our concern about the Jewish influence around your President—" Stöller held up a rigid palm. "Hear me out, Victor. In the circumstances, we need friends in Washington. Simply to present the other side. Roosevelt is a man of very broad vision. He can be made to see that American interest requires a swift, honorable peace in the west. For one thing, only such a development can free him to handle Japan.

"Well, Victor—and remember this is confidential—we do have such friends. Not many. A few. Patriotic Americans, who see the realities of the war. We hope you'll be another such friend."

Pug leaned forward. The conversation was taking a turn which needed sharp handling.

"Let me go on," said the banker. "You know of my connection with Hermann Göring. Well, Göring has established in Switzerland some anonymous bank accounts. These bank accounts, after the war, will be the rewards of Germany's honorable friends who

have said the right word in the right place when it mattered." Stöller sat back. "I've said my piece, Victor."

It was one of the few occasions in Pug's life when he was taken totally by surprise. "Interesting," he said, after a measurable pause. "Tell me, what made you, or General Jagow, or Field Marshal Göring, think that I might be receptive to this approach?"

"My dear chap, the Washington picture is vital, and you're en route to Washington. The day American supplies to England are shut off, we've won the war. And Victor, the field marshal remembers your visit with the banker Gianelli. His purpose now is exactly what Roosevelt's was then, to avoid further useless bloodshed."

Victor Henry nodded. "I see. That's a clear answer, Herr Stöller. Please tell Field Marshal Göring, for me, that he knows exactly where he can stick his Swiss bank account."

Stöller's shocked eyes went wide and glassy. His teeth showed in an ugly smile. "I remind you, Captain Henry," he said in a new, slow, singsong tone, "that you have not yet left the Third Reich. Field Marshal Göring is second here only to the Führer."

"I'm an officer in the United States Navy. Unless I misunderstood you"—Victor Henry's voice hardened almost to a bark—"you've asked me, in his name, to commit treason for money."

The banker's nasty smile faded. In a placating tone he said, "My dear Victor, how *can* you take it in that way? I asked you just to present both sides, when the occasion arose, for the sake of American security and for peace."

"Yes, as a man of honor. I heard you." Victor Henry stood. He knew he had hit too hard, but he had reacted on instinct.

"Listen," Stöller said gently, "we Germans are surrounded by foes. If the United States is ever in such a situation, you may one day make an approach like this to a man you respect, and find it as difficult as I have. I think your response has been naïve and wrong. Still, it was an honorable one. I place a high value on your goodwill, Victor. And we did have good times at Abendruh, didn't we?"

Smiling, Stöller held out his hand. Pug turned on his heel and left the room. Outside, he walked several blocks at a pace that made his heart pound. The thought came to him that, with his insulting words, he might have murdered Ted Gallard.

The Garden Hose
From "World Empire Lost"

The winter and spring between the Battle of Britain and our attack on the Soviet Union stand in popular history as a breathing spell. Actually, in these eight months the axis of the war changed, for the British Empire as a reality left the stage of history. Now the real question to be fought out was this: After the collapse of the British Empire, what shape was the new world order to take, and under whose rule? This historic turn, and this momentous issue, Adolf Hitler foresaw. He inspired and mobilized Germany to rise and dare all to seize the falling crown.

For all of Hitler's military mistakes, and they were many and serious, my professional judgment remains that the German armed forces would have won the war, and world empire, but for one historical accident. Fate produced for Hitler a political opponent even craftier than he, with more sober military judgment and greater material means for industrialized warfare: Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The nation this man led was in no way comparable to the German people in military valor. But that did not matter. This great manipulator so managed the war that other nations bled themselves almost to death. The United States lost fewer men in the entire war than Germany expended in any one of half a dozen campaigns.* This almost bloodless conquest of the earth has no parallel in history. Also, Roosevelt made no major military mistakes—a record matched by no world conqueror since Julius Caesar.

In late 1940, Roosevelt's problem was that he did not lead a warlike nation, whereas Hitler did. Living in prosperous isolation, Americans have been the spoiled children of modern history. Presented with a threat, however, they drop their pleasures, take up arms, and fight bravely, if amateurishly. They formed this pattern in their Revolution, and confirmed it in their Civil War and the First World War.

Thus Roosevelt had to hold Germany at bay until he could present the chance for world conquest to his people in the guise of a threat to

* The low rate of American losses is a fact. We planned and fought that kind of war, expending money and machines instead of lives where possible. Von Roon seems to think this indicates a deficiency in valor. We had enough valor to beat the Germans wherever we took them on, which was all we needed.—V.H.

their safety. This he did. Meantime, he robbed Germany of two certain victories—over Great Britain and over the Soviet Union—by an inspired instrument of indirect warmaking, the so-called Lend-Lease Act.

Under the Neutrality Act, belligerents had both to pay dollars for United States goods, and to come and fetch them. But Britain was running out of dollars to pay even for essential supplies. And so, to circumvent the Neutrality Act and keep the British fighting, Roosevelt devised Lend-Lease, which was simply a policy to give the British (and later the Russians too) free of charge all the war matériel they needed to fight us. The audacity of the trick was breathtaking.

He sold it to the American people with the famous comparison with a garden hose. When a neighbor's house is on fire, he said, one does not bargain with him over the sale of the hose he needs to put it out. One gladly lends him the hose, to keep the fire from one's own house.

This, of course, was poppycock. If your neighbor's house is on fire, you rush over and fight the fire with him. You do not lend him your hose and then stand idly by. If it had been possible for Roosevelt to present the case to his people in truthful terms, he would have said in effect, "My friends, this war is for the mastery of the world. Our aim should be to achieve that mastery ourselves but with a minimum of blood. Let us give others the hardware they need to keep them fighting. They will then shed the blood, and we will take the rule."

That was what Lend-Lease meant and that was how it worked.

28

TRAVELING to his new post in Moscow in mid-January, Leslie Slote was temporarily stalled by a shortage of Lufthansa accommodations from Lisbon to Berlin. While waiting for an air passage, he checked into the Palace Hotel in Estoril, Lisbon's seaside resort, where diplomats, wealthy refugees, Gestapo, and other foreign agents congregated. He found Estoril chilly and boring.

He was sitting in the crowded hotel lobby one afternoon, reading a Swiss newspaper about welcome British successes against the Italians in North Africa, when a page walked through calling his name. Slote jumped up and followed him to a telephone.

"Leslie? It's Bunky. How goes it by the seaside?" Bunker Thurston had attended the Foreign Service school with Slote, and he

was now second secretary in the American legation in Lisbon.

"Mighty dull, Bunky. What's up?"

"Oh, nothing much." Thurston sounded amused. "Only you've spoken to me now and then about a girl named Natalie Jastrow."

Slote said sharply, "Yes. What about her?"

"A girl by that name is sitting in my office."

"Who is? Natalie?"

"That's right. When I told her you were here she jumped a foot."

Natalie came on the phone laughing, and Slote's heart throbbed at the lovely sound. "Hello, old Slote," she said.

"Natalie! Wonderful! What are you doing here?"

"How about you? Why aren't you in Moscow?"

"I got hung up. Are you on your way back to the States?"

Natalie hesitated. "Yes and no. Leslie, can I see you?"

"Naturally! Immediately! I'll come right in."

"Wait. You're at the Palace Hotel? I'd rather come out there."

Thurston came on the line. "Look, Leslie, I'll put her on the bus. She'll arrive in half an hour or so. If I may, I'll join you in the Palace lobby at five."

SHE STILL had a fondness for big dark hats. She got off the bus and ran to him, threw her arms around him, and kissed his cheek. "Hi! Let's look at you. You look rested."

She seemed peculiarly excited. Slote felt the old snare closing in on him again. He said, "Well, *you* look slightly beat up."

"Do I ever! I've had hell's own time getting here. Let's get out of this wind."

He took her arm and started to walk. "Why are you here?"

"Byron's arriving tomorrow on a submarine."

He halted in astonishment. "He made it through that school?"

"He did. This is his first long cruise. You'll think I'm rattlebrained, but he wrote me to come and meet him, and here I am."

"Nothing you do surprises me, sweetie. I'm the man you came to visit in Warsaw in August '39. Now, what's Aaron's situation?"

Natalie told him that the impact of the note from the Secretary of State's office had been frittered away, due to the dawdling of Van Winaker, the young consul in Florence. However, he was

now corresponding with the department and she had his firm promise that he would work things out. The worst of it was that Aaron himself really half welcomed every new delay.

Slote said, "He's in more danger than he realizes, and needs a hard push. Maybe you and I together can shake him free."

"But you're going to Moscow," she said.

"I have thirty days and I've only used up ten. Perhaps I'll go back to Rome with you and drop in on the embassy."

"That would be marvelous!" They had reached the hotel. Natalie halted in the middle of the pillared lobby. "Where's the bar?"

"Down at that end. It's very dismal and virtually Gestapo headquarters. Why? Would you like a drink?"

"I'd just as lief have tea, Leslie." Her manner was evasive.

He took her to a long, narrow public room full of people drinking tea or cocktails. "League of Nations," she said, hearing conversations in many languages, "except that so many look Jewish."

"Too many of them are," Slote said dolefully.

Natalie devoured a whole plate of sugared cakes with her tea. "I shouldn't do this, but I'm famished. I'm getting too fat."

"Possibly I'm prejudiced, but I think you look like the goddess of love, if a bit travel-worn. There's Bunky Thurston." Slote waved as a little pink-faced man with a huge mustache came toward them. "Hi, Bunky. You're late for tea, but just in time for a drink."

With a loud sigh, Thurston sat down. "Thanks. I'll have a double Canadian Club and water. Natalie, here's that list." He handed her a mimeographed sheet. "I couldn't track down Commander Bathurst, but I left word for him to call me here."

Slote glanced inquisitively at the paper. It was a list of documents required for a marriage of foreigners in Portugal. "Why, getting all this together would take months!" Natalie said.

"I've seen it done in one month," Thurston said, "but six to eight weeks is more usual. The Portuguese government doesn't especially want foreigners to get married here. I'm not sure why."

"Thinking of getting married?" Slote said.

She colored at the dry tone. "That was one of many things Byron wrote about. I thought I might as well check."

"Who's Commander Bathurst?" Slote said.

Thurston said, "Our naval attaché. He'll know exactly when the submarine's arriving." He tossed off half his whiskey when the waiter set it before him, and looked around with a bitter expression. "God, Lisbon gives me the creeps. Forty thousand desperate people trying to get out of the net. I've seen most of the faces in this room at our legation. Many of them still don't believe they can't buy their way into the United States. They keep trying."

Slote nodded gloomily. "Am I taking you to dinner, Natalie?"

"Please, I'd love that."

"How about you, Bunky? Will you join us? Let's all go upstairs to my suite. I want to change my shirt, and all that."

"No, I have a dinner appointment. I'll sit here and have my drink with Natalie."

Slote told Natalie the number of his suite and left. Later she found a penciled note stuck in his doorjamb: "N—Door's open." She walked into a very large living room, looking out onto the purple sea beyond a long iron-railed balcony. Slote was singing in the shower. She yelled, "Hey! I'm here."

He soon appeared in a plaid robe, toweling his head. "How about these digs? Fit for a rajah, what? I've got it for a week."

"It's fine." She sat down heavily. "Bathurst finally called. Briny's sub has been rerouted to Gibraltar. It won't come to Lisbon at all."

"Maybe you can get to see him at Gibraltar."

"Thurston doesn't think so, but he's going to find out. He's being very kind." She took off her hat and tossed her hair. "This is quite a layout at that. Me, I'm in a boardinghouse, sharing a room with a poor old Jewish lady from Rotterdam whose husband got pulled off the train in Paris. I haven't had a shower since Sunday."

"Why not move in here? There's a maid's room I can sleep in."

"Nothing doing. Slote, if I can get to Gibraltar I'll marry Byron. That's what he wants." Her eyes shone. "I want it myself."

"Well, I suppose I should congratulate you, Natalie. Now you can take a shower anyway."

"And climb into the same old clothes?" She shook her head. "I noticed a shop downstairs. I'll see what Lisbon has to offer."

Within a half hour she was back, carrying a box. "I bought a pile of stuff. Maybe it's my trousseau! Byron's eyes will pop out of

his head, if he ever shows up. Did you really mean that invitation to stay? That poor old woman gives me the horrors."

"I said the place is yours."

She paused at the bedroom door and turned. "People wouldn't understand about us, would they, Slote?"

"There's nothing to understand about me. You're the puzzle."

"You didn't used to think I was puzzling."

"I thought I had you figured out. I'm paying a steep price for oversimplifying."

"You were an egotistical dope. I am very fond of you."

"Thanks, Jastrow. Go take your damned shower."

NEXT morning a buzzing at the suite door woke Slote. Tying on a robe, he came out of the tiny maid's room and blinked. There in the sunshine sat Natalie in a dazzling white wool suit with a gold belt, watching a waiter fuss over a breakfast on a wheeled table. "Oh, hi," she said, smiling. "I ordered eggs for you."

"I'll brush my teeth and join you. How long have you been up?"

"Hours. I'm supposed to wait for Byron in the bar here at eleven today. That was the original plan."

Slote peered at her. "But his sub's en route to Gibraltar."

"That's what that naval attaché said. Suppose he's mistaken?"

Shaking his head, Slote signed for the breakfast and left the room. Soon he returned, fully dressed, and began to eat. "Sweetie, do you honestly expect Byron to materialize in this hotel at eleven o'clock just on your sheer willpower? It's irrational."

"Navy signals could get crossed up. *I'm* going to be there. But don't be cross with me, Leslie."

"I'm not cross. Look, I'll call Bunky to find out how you get to Gibraltar. I'll see you in the bar at noon."

"Will you? Oh, thanks, Leslie, thanks for everything."

Slote judged his chance was now at hand. Gibraltar was probably impossible to get to, so Natalie would have to go back to Italy. He would accompany her, pry Aaron loose, and send them both home. If he could not win her back during all this, he sadly overestimated himself. When Natalie had gone, he called Thurston. "Morning, Bunky. What did you find out about Gibraltar?"

"Les, that submarine's here. It came in at dawn, for three days." Slote had seldom heard worse news. "Then what on earth was Bathurst talking about?"

"He's mighty puzzled. They had orders for Gibraltar." Thurston's voice turned puckish. "Tough luck, Les. Fantastic girl."

Slote hung up and hurried downstairs. Natalie was not in the bar. He went striding through the lobby.

"Here, Slotel! Look behind you!" Natalie's voice rang like joyous bells. Half screened by potted palms, she sat on a green plush sofa with Byron. Before them on a coffee table lay a pile of documents.

Slote said, "Well, hello!" as Byron jumped up to shake hands. "Did Natalie tell you we had some very wrong information?"

Byron laughed. "It wasn't wrong, exactly, but anyway, here we are." His glance swept the lobby. "This place smells of Berlin. Isn't it full of Germans?"

"They swarm, darling." Excitedly, Natalie pulled at Byron's hand. "I can't find your certificate of residence."

"It's clipped with yours."

"Then he's got everything," Natalie told Slote. "And all translated into Portuguese, notarized, and the notary seals authenticated by Portuguese consuls." As Byron dropped beside her, she said, "I thought you were lousy at paper work, you devil."

Slote said, "Are you really sure everything's there? Suppose I check it over." Natalie handed him the documents and the list Thurston had given her. "How on earth did you assemble all this?"

Byron explained that as soon as he had learned of the scheduled cruise to Lisbon, he had obtained an emergency four-day pass and had flown to Washington to find out at the Portuguese embassy what the marriage regulations were. The naval attaché there, Captain D'Esaguy, had turned out to be a friend from Berlin, and he had gone right to work. "It's surprising what those fellows can accomplish in a few days when they want to," Byron said.

Slote had been methodically checking one paper after another. "Well, everything seems to be here."

"What now?" Natalie said.

"Will you marry me?" Byron said very solemnly.

Natalie said, "I sure will, by God." They burst out laughing.

Slote slipped the papers into their folder. "I'll telephone Bunky Thurston at the legation and ask him what you do next."

Returning a few minutes later, he saw them holding hands, looking adoringly at each other. He hesitated, then approached them. "Sorry. Problems."

Natalie looked up at him, startled. "What now?"

"Well, Bunky's bowled over by what you've done, Byron, but he doesn't know what he can do about that twelve-day requirement for posting banns. And the Foreign Office's authentication of the consuls' signatures usually takes a week."

"Right. Captain D'Esaguy mentioned both those points," Byron said. "He thought they could be gotten around. His uncle's a commodore at the navy ministry in Lisbon. I stopped off there this morning and gave Commodore D'Esaguy a letter. He was awfully nice but he only speaks Portuguese. I'm to go back at one o'clock. Could Mr. Thurston meet us there? That might be a real help."

Slote looked from Byron to Natalie, whose mouth was twitching with amusement. "I'll call and ask him."

With some stupefaction, Bunker Thurston agreed to meet them. "I thought you called this ensign of hers a sluggard and a feather-head. He's organized this thing like a blitzkrieg."

"Surprised me. I'll see you at the navy ministry at one."

Outside the hotel, a tall man in navy dress blues leaned on the fender of an automobile. "Hey, Briny! Is the exercise on?"

"It's on." Byron introduced him to Natalie and Slote as Lieutenant Aster, his executive officer. Aster had a genial face, but a tight tough mouth. "Hop in, everybody," he said. "Briny, the skipper says you're off the watch list while we're here."

"Great, Lady. Thanks."

Natalie said, "*Lady?*"

The executive officer's smile was weary. "With a name like Aster, it had to happen. My name's Carter, Natalie, and please use it."

Driving into the city, the two submariners described how the S-45, a hundred and fifty miles out of Lisbon, had been ordered to Gibraltar. The captain, who knew of Byron's plans, had expressed regrets but altered course. Within an hour he was receiving reports of malfunctions breaking out all over the old boat. Aster recom-

mended an emergency call in Lisbon for repairs. With a straight face the captain accepted the recommendation.

"Won't you all be court-martialed?" said Slote.

"Nobody was lying," Aster said innocently. "We have records to prove it. These old S-boats just gasp and flounder. At practically any moment you could justify an order to abandon ship."

"And you submerge in a wreck like that?" Natalie said.

"Well, the S-45 has made four thousand, seven hundred and twenty dives," Byron said. "It should be good for a few more."

"By the way," said Lady Aster, "everybody's invited aboard after the ceremony. The captain wants to congratulate you."

Shaking hands outside the navy ministry, Bunker Thurston gave Ensign Henry a prolonged curious scrutiny. "I'm glad to meet a fellow with such a knack for getting things done."

"This isn't done yet, sir. Thanks for helping."

"Well, you've got some strong pull on your side. D'Esaguy seems to be something like a deputy chief of naval operations."

Judging by the magnificence of his office, D'Esaguy certainly held some exalted post. He was a short dark man with a stern Latin face. He welcomed the Americans graciously, and to Natalie he made a deep bow, his black eyes showing a spark of admiration. Then he spoke rapidly to Thurston in Portuguese.

"He says these things take time," Thurston reported. "He would like to invite us all to lunch."

Byron glanced at Natalie. "That's very cordial of him. Does he know we only have three days?"

The Portuguese officer's eyes were on Byron as Thurston translated. A flash of fun in the somber face acknowledged the impatience of a young lover. He rapped an order to an assistant, who jumped up and went out. After a minute he returned with a bouquet of red roses. D'Esaguy handed them to Natalie with a bow and a few charmingly spoken words. Thurston translated: "The dew will not dry on these roses before you are married."

"Good God. How beautiful. Thank you!" Natalie stood holding the roses, blushing. "You know, I'm beginning to believe it!"

The lunch was long and excellent, in a restaurant with a lordly view of the Lisbon hills and the broad sparkling river. The com-

modore seemed in no hurry at all. At three, he said casually that perhaps they might see now how the little business was coming along. In an enormous black Mercedes limousine they commenced a whirling tour of government offices. Sometimes D'Esaguy descended for a few minutes by himself, sometimes he took the couple and Thurston along, sometimes they signed something.

About two hours later they arrived at the office where civil marriages were registered. It was closed for the day and the blinds were drawn, but as the car came to a stop one blind went up and the door opened. They were taken to a room where a frog-faced man with gold-rimmed glasses sat at an ancient desk. He greeted them and spoke to Thurston in Portuguese. Thurston translated his questions; the man scratched with a blotchy pen on many of Byron's documents and kept stamping them. Natalie, Byron, and the two witnesses—Aster and Slote—signed and signed. After a while the man stood up, and with a smile held out his hand to Natalie and then to Byron, saying, "Good luck for you."

"What's this now?" Natalie said.

"You're married," Thurston said. "Congratulations."

"We *are*? When did we get married? I missed it."

"When you both signed the green book. That was it."

Byron said, "Hey, let's have that ring, Lady."

Aster put it in Byron's hand and he slipped it on Natalie's finger, swept her into his arms, and kissed her. Meantime Thurston told D'Esaguy about the American custom of kissing the bride. Natalie said that D'Esaguy must kiss her first. With marked pleasure, the commodore did so. Then he left, after handshakes all around.

Slote was the last to kiss her. Natalie said, "Well, old Slote, I seem to have done it, don't I? Wish me well."

"Oh, I do, I do, Jastrow. You know that."

She gave him a cool brief kiss on the mouth.

When they emerged into the late golden sunshine, Slote felt something loose and grainy thrust in his hand. It was rice. Lieutenant Aster winked a sharp blue eye. At a signal from him, the three men pelted the couple.

Natalie, brushing rice from her suit, wiped her eyes with a knuckle. "Well, *that* certainly makes it official!"

"And now," said Lady Aster, "the skipper's expecting us."

"Where will you go after that?" Slote said dryly to Byron.

"Well, I figured—a hotel, something."

"Lisbon's jammed," said Slote. "Why not take my place?"

Byron shook his head, but Natalie said, "Oh, his place is out of the Arabian Nights." She added casually, "I had a drink there last night. *Would* you do such a thing for us, old Slote?"

"Leslie can stay with me," Thurston said. "No problem. Pick me up at the legation, Les. I have to rush."

"It's all set," said Slote. "I'll go to the hotel now and clear out."

"Bless you," said Natalie. "And Bunky, thanks for everything."

NATALIE was astonished at the small size of the submarine. "Is *that* it?" she shouted over the clanks and squeals of an overhead crane, as they got out of the cab. "Briny, honestly, don't you get claustrophobia when you dive in that thing?"

"He's never stayed awake long enough to find out," said Aster.

At the gangway, a young tousle-headed sailor saluted Aster and said, "Cap'n wants you-all to wait for him on the dock, sir."

Soon a figure in a blue uniform, with the gold stripes of a lieutenant, appeared. He was shaped rather like a submarine, clumsily thick in the middle and tapering to either end.

"Captain Caruso, this is my wife," said Byron, jolting Natalie with the word.

Caruso took her hand. "Well, congratulations! Byron's a good lad, in his short conscious intervals."

"Do you really sleep that much?" Natalie laughed at Byron.

"It's pure slander. I seldom close my eyes," said Byron, "except to meditate on my folly in going to sub school."

"Eighteen hours straight," said Aster, "is solid gold meditating."

"Ah, here we go," said the captain, as two sailors crossed the gangway, carrying champagne in an ice bucket and a tray of glasses. "Navy regs don't allow us to consume spirituous liquors on board, Mrs. Henry," Caruso went on, and again she felt the joyous jolt. He popped the cork and ceremoniously poured. "To your happiness," he shouted, as the crane clanged by overhead.

"To you, God bless you," yelled Natalie, "for bringing him here."

"To S-45," bellowed Lady Aster. "Never has there been such a massive breakdown on a naval vessel."

Byron lifted his glass to his captain and executive officer.

They drank; the glasses were refilled. The crane rumbled away.

The captain smiled at Natalie. "Now, can I offer you the hospitality of the boat for a little while?"

She followed the officers on board and down the hatch, the ladder's slippery rungs catching at her heels. She had to lower herself through a second hatch and down another ladder into a tiny room full of machinery, strongly conscious of her exposed legs.

"This is the control room," Byron said, helping her down.

Natalie looked around at the dials, handles, wheels, and lights. "Briny, do you really know what all these things are?"

"He's learning," said Lady Aster.

They stepped through an open watertight door to the tiny wardroom, where Natalie met two more young officers. On the table stood a heart-shaped white cake, iced in blue with a submarine, cupids, and "Mr. and Mrs. Byron Henry." She squeezed herself into the place of honor opposite the captain. Somebody produced a sword, she cut up the cake, and the captain sent what was left to the crew's quarters. The two glasses of champagne were going to Natalie's head. She was dizzy anyway from the rush of events and the longing that blazed at her from all these young men's eyes.

Over the coffee and cake she laughed at Lady Aster's jokes, and decided that the old submarine, for all its cramped squalor and reek of machinery, was a mighty jolly vessel.

When she and Byron came out on deck into the cool fresh air, crewmen on the forecastle waved and cheered and Natalie waved back. The gangway watch had called a taxicab for them. Once inside it, Natalie snuggled against her husband. "I daresay poor Slote's left the hotel by now. We'll collect my bags from the boardinghouse and go there. Wait till you see it. It was terrible of me to accept it, but honestly, Briny, it's the royal suite."

THE DESK clerk at the Palace Hotel evidently had been informed, for he yielded up the key to Byron with a greasy grin. They had to give him their passports. Natalie felt a touch of fear, handing



over the maroon American booklet that set her off from Lisbon's forty thousand other Jews.

As the bellboy opened the door to the suite, Natalie felt herself whisked off her feet. "Byron, stop! You'll slip a disk." But she clung to his neck, excited by his surprising lean strength.

"Hey," he said. "Royal suite is right."

When he put her down she darted ahead of him, remembering the negligee she had left hanging in Slote's bathroom, and the new sexy underwear in a bureau drawer. It might take some explaining! But all the stuff was gone. She was puzzling over this when Byron appeared in the French door, on the balcony. "This is great out here. Did you notice the champagne? And the lilies?"

On a table in the living room, beside champagne in a silver cooler, stood a bouquet of red and white calla lilies, and beside them Slote's small white card. The doorbell rang. A bellboy gave Natalie a box from the lingerie shop. She hurried back to the bedroom and opened it. There lay the underclothes Slote had cleared out, a many-colored froth of silk and lace.

"What was it?" Byron called from the balcony.

"Oh, some stuff I bought in a lobby shop," Natalie replied airily. Then she saw a note in Slote's handwriting: "Wear the gray, Jastrow. You always looked angelic in gray. Confidential communication, to be destroyed. Yours till death. Slote."

The words brought a mist to Natalie's eyes. She tore the note to bits and pulled from the box the gray silk nightdress laced in black. In the next room she heard a cork pop, and quite forgot Leslie Slote as she speedily showered and perfumed herself. She emerged from the bedroom brushing her long hair down on her shoulders. Byron seized her. . . .

. . . Wine, lilies, and roses; the dark sea rolling beyond the windows under a round moon; young lovers separated for half a year, joined on a knife edge of geography between war and peace, suddenly married, far from home; performing secret rites as old as time, but forever fresh and sweet between young lovers. Such was their wedding night.

The lavish pulses of love died into the warm deep sleep of exhausted lovers; Mr. and Mrs. Byron Henry, Americans, slumbering

in wedlock in the Palace Hotel outside Lisbon, on a January night of 1941, one of the more than two thousand nights of the Second World War, when so much of mankind slept so badly.

THEY breakfasted late in the sunny sitting room, on oysters, steak, and red wine; Natalie ordered it, and Byron called it a perfect menu. They were radiant with shared, gratified desire.

Then she said, "Byron, exactly how much time do we have?"

"Well, seventy-two hours from the time we came alongside would be seven a.m. Thursday." The pure gladness in her eyes dimmed. "Natalie, this isn't our honeymoon. I'm entitled to twenty days' leave. I'll take it once you're home. When will that be?"

"Oh, dear. Must I start thinking?"

"Look, Natalie. Send Aaron a wire that we're married, and go straight home. I don't want you going back to Italy."

She raised her eyebrows at his tone. "But I have to."

"No, you don't. Aaron's a tough little bird really."

"He's not good with officials, and the stupider they are the worse he gets. He could easily trap himself. Leslie Slote and I together can get him out in short order, and this time we'll do it. Slote's offered to stop off on his way to Moscow."

"All right. Two months. No more. If Aaron's not out by April first, you come home. Book your transportation now."

Natalie's wide mouth curved wryly. "You know, that feels pretty good, being ordered around, though possibly the delicious novelty will wear off. Anyway, lord and master, I'll do as you say."

"Okay," Byron said. "Let's go out and show me Lisbon."

Dropping the key at the desk, he asked for their passports. The clerk disappeared through a door. Some Germans in belted black raincoats stood near the lobby entrance, staring at everybody who came and went. "Look at those fellows," Byron said. "They might as well be wearing swastikas. What is it about them?"

"I don't know, but the back of my neck crawls," Natalie said.

The desk clerk reappeared. "Sorry, passports not ready."

"I need mine!" Natalie's tone was strident.

The clerk barely lifted his eyes at her. "Maybe this afternoon, madame," he said, turning his back.

Byron hired a taxi to drive them around. Lisbon was no Rome or Paris for sights, but Byron enjoyed himself, and he thought his bride was having fun too. They left the cab to descend arm in arm the steep, narrow streets of the Alfama, where ragged children swarmed in and out of cracking crazy houses hundreds of years old, and where open shops the size of telephone booths sold fish, bread, and meat scraps. It was a long wandering walk.

"Where did the cab promise to meet us?" Natalie spoke up in a strained tone. "My feet hurt."

"Why, let's go back. I've had plenty of this."

She said not a word as they drove back to the hotel. At the door she said, "Don't forget—passports."

It proved unnecessary. With the key, the desk clerk handed him two maroon booklets. Natalie snatched hers and riffled through it as they walked to the elevator.

"I'll bet the Gestapo's photographed this. Yours too."

"Probably routine. I don't think the Portuguese are denying the Germans much nowadays. But what do you care?"

Byron followed her to the bedroom and took her in his arms. She held him close, but when he kissed her she seemed apathetic.

"All right," he said, "what is it?"

"Sorry," she answered. "I guess nobody can experience such joy without paying. If you must know, I've been in a black hole ever since we didn't get our passports back and those Germans were standing there." She sat on the bed, hugging her knees.

"Well, you've got your passport back now." He stroked her hair. "I thought you were enjoying Lisbon."

"I *loathe* Lisbon, Briny. People say it looks like San Francisco. But San Francisco isn't full of Jews fleeing the Germans. The Inquisition didn't baptize Jews by force in San Francisco, and burn the ones who objected. Do you know that little tidbit of history? It happened here."

Byron's face was serious. "Maybe I read it once."

"Maybe? If you had, how could you forget? *Anybody's* blood should run cold at such cruelty."

Byron said, "Natalie, I'll do anything you want about the religion. Would you want me to become Jewish?"

"Are you *insane*?" Her eyes had the angry shine they had had that day in Königsberg. "Why did you insist on getting married? *That's* what's eating at me. I feel tied to you now with a rope of raw nerves. I don't know where you're going or when I'll ever see you again. Why don't we tear up those Portuguese documents? If we ever find ourselves in a human situation, and if we still care, we can get properly married. This was a farce."

"No, it wasn't. It's the only thing I've wanted since I was born. Now I've got it. We're not tearing up any papers. You're my wife."

"God in heaven, *why* have you put yourself in this mess?"

"Well, it's like this, Natalie. Married officers get extra pay."

She stared at him, her taut face relaxing, and slowly smiled. "I see! You should have told me sooner. I can understand greed."

He took her in his arms again. Mouth to mouth, they fell back on the bed, but the telephone rang and the kisses had to stop. Byron picked up the receiver. "Yes. Oh, hello, Lady . . . *Tomorrow?* I see." He hung up and looked at Natalie. "There's been a change of orders. The S-45 leaves tomorrow morning. Lady's coming for me at six."

NATALIE went with Byron to the boat. When they reached the docks, the submarine was dwarfed by a rusty old tramp steamer berthed directly ahead with an enormous Stars and Stripes painted on its side and the name *Yankee Belle* stenciled on bow and stern. Jews lined the quay, waiting quietly to go aboard, most of them with cardboard suitcases and cloth bundles. Policemen paced up and down, and at a table two Portuguese officials were stamping papers. The rail of the ship was black with passengers, staring at Lisbon the way freed prisoners look at a jail.

"When did that old bucket show up?" Byron asked.

"Yesterday morning. Its crew are mostly Greeks and Turks, and the pleasanter ones seem to be professional cutthroats," Aster said. "I gather the Jews will be packed into five-decker bunks, for which they pay the price of first class on the *Queen Mary*." He glanced at his watch. "Well, we cast off at 0715. Good-by, Natalie. You were a beautiful bride, and now you're a beautiful navy wife."

The exec stepped aboard. On the dock nearby a sailor was kiss-

ing a dumpy Portuguese trollop. With a grin, Byron held out his arms to his wife, and she embraced him. "You fool," she said. "You went and married the creature."

"I was drunk," Byron said, holding her tight.

A boatswain's whistle blew on the submarine. "Well, I guess this is it," he said. "So long."

Natalie managed to smile. "Getting married was the right idea, my love. I mean that. It was an inspiration, and I adore you for it. I love you and I'm happy."

She watched him go aboard, saluting as he stepped on deck. Standing on the dock, smelling the wharfside odors—tar, machinery, fish, the sea—hearing the bleak cry of the gulls, she knew what it felt like to be a navy wife.

29

IN WASHINGTON, Victor Henry was reassigned to War Plans. He did not hear from Roosevelt at all. But Pug was untroubled by the assignment, though he had craved sea duty. More than his career, he cared about the war and the future of the United States. And War Plans was now dealing with hard-boiled realities.

Early in January, with a few other planners, Pug had begun "conversations" with British military men. In theory, Air Commodore Burne-Wilke and his delegation were in Washington on vague missions of observing or purchase. In fact, by the first of March these conferences were finishing up a war operations plan on a world scale. The assumption was that Japan would one day attack, but the key decision lay in two words: Germany first. Pug was heartened that the American naval planners concurred in this, for most of the navy was preoccupied with Japan.

It was clear to Pug that if Japan entered the war, with her annual steel production of only a few million tons, she could not hold out long if Germany were beaten. But if the Germans knocked out the British and got their fleet, they could conquer whole continents, whatever happened to Japan. From his talks in the Army and Navy Club, however, he knew that the "Germany first" decision, if it came out, would create a fantastic howl.

It was strange to sit down with the British every morning in the old Navy Building to work on global combat plans, after reading in the papers the latest shrill Lend-Lease argument in Congress. Pug could not get over the cool dissembling of the few high officials who knew of the "conversations." He wondered about a system which required such deviousness. "I don't know," he remarked to Burne-Wilke, "maybe the only thing you can say for democracy is that all other forms of government are even worse."

"Worse for what?" was the air commodore's acid reply. "If other forms are better for winning wars, no other virtue counts."

Pug got along well with Burne-Wilke, who had fully grasped the landing craft problem. Among the planners, a labored joke was spreading about Captain Henry's girl friend, "Elsie," a play on LC (landing craft), the importance of which he kept stressing.

He seldom encountered Pamela Tudsbury, whom the air commodore had brought along as his typist aide. Tucked in an office in the British Purchasing Commission, she worked hard and her face was thin. She had not written she was coming. They met for a drink just once and he amplified on his letter about Ted Gallard. She looked extremely young to him, and his infatuation seemed distant and hardly believable. Yet the hour with her was warmly pleasurable, and any day when he saw her was a good day for him.

Rhoda had received him with a puzzling mixture of moods—demonstrative affection alternating with spells of heavy gloom and loud irascibility over her move back to Washington. She leveled off to a cool detachment, busying herself with Bundles for Britain and finding many reasons for trips to New York. In a casual way she sometimes mentioned Palmer Kirby, now one of the chairmen of Bundles for Britain. She was disappointed when Pug went back to War Plans instead of getting a command at sea.

News about their children intermittently drew them together. Byron's offhand letter about his hasty marriage in Lisbon was a shock. They agonized about it for days, comforting each other, before becoming resigned to the fact. Warren as usual sent good news. His wife was returning to Washington to have her baby, and he had been promoted to lieutenant.

Pug turned fifty on a Sunday early in March. He sat in church

beside his wife, trying, as the choir sang "Holy, Holy, Holy," to shake off a sense that he had missed all the right turns in life. He counted his blessings: his wife was still beautiful, still capable of love; his two sons were naval officers; his daughter was self-supporting; he was serving where he was doing some good.

Rhoda was thinking that for the first time since his return her husband would soon be meeting Palmer Kirby face-to-face.

A SNOWSTORM clogged the capital on the night of Rhoda's dinner party. By quarter past seven her guests, including Kirby, had straggled in, but the dinner was still stalled. Pug was missing.

In the kitchen of the elegant little rented house on Tracy Place, Rhoda made a last-minute check and found all in order: soup hot, ducks tender, vegetables on the boil, cook snarling over the delay. She sailed out to her guests, her eyes bright with nervous excitement. Kirby and Pamela Tudsbury were talking on the big couch, Madeline and Janice had their heads together in a corner, and on facing settees before a log fire Alistair Tudsbury and Air Commodore Burne-Wilke were chatting with the recently elected Senator Lacouture and his wife: a hodgepodge company, but it was only a hurried dinner before a Bundles for Britain concert at Constitution Hall. Pug's meeting with Kirby was what concerned her.

"We'll wait a few more minutes." Rhoda sat herself beside the scientist. "Then we'll have to eat."

"Where is Captain Henry?" Pamela said calmly. Her mauve dress came to a halter around her neck, leaving her slim shoulders naked; her tawny hair was piled high on her head. Rhoda remembered Pamela as a mousy girl, but this was no mouse.

"I'm blessed if I can say. Military secrecy covers a multitude of sins, doesn't it?" Rhoda laughed. "That's a divine dress, my dear."

"Do you like it? Thank you." Pamela smoothed the skirt.

"The Waring Hotel then would be the best bet, Pamela?" Kirby took up the conversation Rhoda had broken into.

"If they've repaired the bomb damage done in the Buckingham Palace area in October. By now, they should have."

"Why, Palmer, are you going to London? How adventurous!" Rhoda laughed, covering her surprise.

Mrs. Lacouture's voice rose above the talk. "Janice, in your condition, should you be drinking all those martinis?"

"Oh, Mother," said Janice, as the white-coated old Filipino, a retired navy steward hired for the evening, shakily filled her glass.

The telephone rang, and Rhoda went to answer it. "Oh, *hello* . . . oh, my gawd . . . of course. Okay. Bye, dear." She fluttered her long pale hands at the company. "Well, let's drink up. Pug sends apologies. He's stuck at the White House."

In Washington, when the absent diner is at the White House the empty chair is not an embarrassment. Nobody asked what Pug was doing there, or made any comment. Rhoda put Burne-Wilke on her right and the senator on her left, saying, "Protocol still baffles me. I'm favoring our foreign guest, Senator."

"Absolutely proper," said Lacouture.

Alistair Tudsbury said, "Air Commodore Burne-Wilke will gladly yield you his seat on this occasion, Senator, if he can take yours when Lend-Lease comes to a vote."

"Oh, done, done," exclaimed Burne-Wilke.

Everyone laughed. Rhoda said, "Well, what good spirits! I was afraid our English friends would eat Senator Lacouture alive."

The senator crinkled his eyes. "You British aren't that hard up for meat yet, are you? But seriously, Rhoda, I'm glad you brought us together. Maybe I've convinced our friends that I'm not a Nazi-lover, but just a fellow with my own point of view. If Roosevelt wants to send England arms free of charge, why the devil doesn't he *say* so, instead of giving us all this Lend-Lease baloney?"

"I think the country's going mad," said Janice. "I got stuck in a taxi this afternoon, in front of the White House. Communists were marching around chanting, 'The Yanks are not coming,' and next to them was a mob of women, Christian Mothers of America, kneeling in the snow. All protesting Lend-Lease."

"It just shows how broad the opposition is," said the senator. "Cuts across all lines."

"On the contrary," put in Kirby, "both extremes seem to be against helping England, while the mass in the middle is for it."

The street door opened and closed. Pug came into the dining room. "Apologies," he said, taking off his blue bridge coat. "No,

no, don't get up, I'll just join you, and change later." But the men were all standing. He walked around the table for handshakes, and came last to Kirby. "Hello," he said. "It's been a long time."

"Sure has. Too long."

Only Rhoda knew the scientist well enough to note that his smile was awkward. She had a surprising sensation—pleasure and pride that two such men loved her. It was actually one of the nicest moments in her life.

Pug took his seat and began chatting to Kirby about Byron, whose submarine had just put in at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Just then Mrs. Lacouture uttered a little shriek. The old steward was offering soup to Burne-Wilke and, distracted by the Englishman's medals, had tilted the tray. The open soup tureen was slipping toward Rhoda, but even as it left the tray, she plucked it out of the air and set it on the table, not spilling a drop.

"Well done," Pug called over the gasps and laughter.

Everybody had a joke or a compliment for Rhoda. She became exhilarated and began reminiscing about Nazi dinner parties in Berlin. Pug offered an account of the slide at Abendruh. Then Burne-Wilke gave jocular anecdotes about the arrogance of captured Luftwaffe pilots. The dinner was a great success.

While the others had dessert, Victor Henry went to change into dress uniform. The guests were wrapping up to brave the snow when he rejoined them. As he helped Pamela Tudsbury into her coat, she said over her shoulder, "There's news of Ted."

"Oh? Good or bad?"

"Won't you telephone me? Please do."

"WELL! Nobody's seen Constitution Hall looking like this before," Rhoda said, "or ever will again, maybe. It's fantastic."

Every seat was filled. Rhoda had taken two boxes nearest to the President's. The Lacoutures with Janice, the air commodore, and Tudsbury were in the choicer one. She and Pamela sat at the rail in the other, with Pug, Kirby, and Madeline behind them.

The audience stood and applauded as the Vice-President and his wife stepped into the presidential box. Henry Wallace responded with a self-conscious wave. He looked like an intelligent

farmer, uncomfortable in his evening clothes. The orchestra struck up "The Star-Spangled Banner" and then "God Save the King," which, with the nearness of Pam's bare white shoulders, awakened memories of London in Pug's mind. A wisp of guilt touched him.

Rhoda couldn't have been more at ease. She loved sitting in a box so near the Vice-President, and she looked forward to the supper dance afterward. Only Kirby's news that he was going to England troubled her a bit. She meant to ask him about *that*.

During the intermission crush, Victor Henry and Dr. Kirby were left together by the ladies in the overheated lobby. Pug suggested a breath of air. Outside, the snow had stopped, but there were few people about. Pug said, "Anything very new on uranium?"

Kirby shook his head, making a discouraged mouth.

"Are the Germans going to beat us to it?"

Again the answer was a shrug.

"As you know, I'm in War Plans," Victor Henry said curtly. "I'm pushing you because we ought to have the dope, and we can't get it. Could we be doing more about it?"

"One hell of a lot. I'm going to England on this. They're apparently ahead of us."

"As on other things," Pug said. "That's something nobody mentions in this brainless Lend-Lease dogfight. We'd damned well better keep the British scientists on our side."

"I agree. But we're ahead of them in many things too." Kirby puffed his pipe. "Are you happy to be home?"

"Happy? Yes, I guess so. Rhoda was sick of Berlin, and being there by myself was certainly grim."

"She's a superb hostess, Rhoda," said Kirby. "That was something, the way she rescued that tureen." He uttered a harsh laugh.

"Rhoda's a born juggler," said Pug.

Kirby wrinkled his whole face. "Let's go back in."

At the door they met Madeline hurrying out. "Where are you off to?" her father said.

"I told Mom I wouldn't be able to stay through. Mr. Cleveland's just back from Quantico. I have to see him."

"Will you come to the dance afterward?"

Madeline sneezed. "I'm not sure, Dad. I have a cold."

The Winds of War

A WAITER WITH A SANDWICH and a double martini on a tray was knocking at the door of Cleveland's suite when Madeline got there. The familiar voice sounded peevish. "It's open, come on in."

Her employer sat with his stocking feet up on a desk, talking into a telephone. "Got anything good-looking to send up to me?" he was saying. He waved at her, putting his hand over the mouthpiece. "Hey, Matty! I thought you weren't going to make it. Sign that and give him a buck. Want anything yourself?"

"A drink, thanks. I've got a cold."

"Bring another double," Cleveland said to the waiter. He turned back to the telephone. "Later, okay? Oh, maybe an hour."

"How was Quantico?" Madeline said, when he hung up.

"The commandant's all excited. He thinks it's a wonderful recruiting stunt." Cleveland explained the arrangements he had made for a broadcast from the marine camp. "I want you to go there tomorrow. To screen the performers, get the personal stuff and all that. They've already got an amateur thing going. They call it the Happy Hour."

"The Happy Hour's an old custom all through the service." Madeline blew her nose. "I think I've got a fever. I don't want to go and interview a lot of marines."

Cleveland got up and felt her forehead. "You have no fever."

"Don't touch me, please."

"What's the matter?"

"I just don't want to be touched."

The waiter knocked. "Double martini, sir."

"Thanks." Cleveland offered the tray to Madeline when the waiter left. "Sit down and have your drink. Here's all the dope on Quantico"—he gave her an envelope—"who to see, and the list of performers. If you're still not feeling well tomorrow, call me."

"Oh, I'll manage." Madeline sat and drank. "There are Happy Hours at all the navy bases," she said. "Practically on every ship. Couldn't you do more shows like this? It's something different."

"It's a one-shot, Matty. Just a novelty. The regular amateurs are our meat and potatoes."

"If we get in the war," Madeline said, "talented people will be drafted, won't they?"

"Could be. If we get in the war. A series in itself, maybe. Start a file on Wartime Ideas, Matty." Cleveland stretched. "All right, Matty. See you back in New York."

When the girl had gone, he picked up the telephone. "Bell captain . . . Cleveland. All right. A dark-haired one's fine. Thanks."

A BRAHMS symphony was putting Pug in a doze when a tap and a whisper woke him. "Captain Henry?" The usher appeared excited and awed. "The White House is on the telephone."

He spoke a few words into his wife's ear and departed. During applause Rhoda said, looking around at his still empty chair, "Pug's evidently gone back to the White House."

"Man's life isn't his own, is it?" Kirby said.

Pamela said, "Will he rejoin you at the dance?"

Rhoda made a helpless gesture.

An hour or so later, Pug stood at the entrance to the grand ballroom of the Shoreham; glumly surveying the scene. The naval aide at the White House had just told him, among other things, of thirty thousand tons sunk in the Atlantic in the past two days.

Alistair Tudsbury came capering past him with a blond lady of about forty. "Ah, there, Pug! You're glaring like Savonarola! Rhoda's down at the other end."

"Did Pamela come to the dance?"

"She went to the office. She's doing the overworked patriot."

Tudsbury twirled the blonde away. Crossing the dance floor, Pug saw his wife at a small supper table with Palmer Kirby.

"Hello, dear!" she called. "Get a plate and join us."

"I'll get you one," said Kirby, rising. "Sit down, Pug."

"No, no. I have to run home and pack a bag." To his wife he said, "I just came to tell you I'll be gone overnight." He bent and kissed her cheek. "Sorry, darling. Enjoy the dance."

Rhoda and Palmer Kirby sat without speaking. Dancers moved past them, sometimes calling to Rhoda, "Lovely party, dear. Marvelous." She was smiling and waving in response when Kirby pushed aside his plate. "Well, I leave for New York at seven tomorrow, myself. I'd better turn in. A fine evening. Thanks, Rhoda."

"Palmer, I just have to stay another half hour or so." Kirby's

face was set, his large brown eyes were distant and melancholy. "Well, will I see you before you go to London?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Then I'll walk out with you." In the lobby, she stopped to primp her hair in a mirror. "I'm sorry," she said. "I meant to tell Pug as soon as he got back. But he was so glad to be home. I just couldn't."

Kirby nodded, with a cold expression.

"Then along came this awful jolt," she went on. "Byron marrying this girl in Lisbon. It took both of us days to simmer down. And then Janice arrived, all pregnant and whatnot. I mean, this close prospect of becoming grandparents, for the first time—you've just got to let me pick my moment, dear. It won't be easy."

He said, "I've been very uncomfortable tonight. I really want to get married again, Rhoda. I've never felt that more strongly than I did at your dinner table."

"Palmer, don't give me an ultimatum, for heaven's sake."

"I won't do that." He glanced her up and down with a sudden smile. "Gosh, how pretty you look tonight, and what a grand success this dance is. You're quite a manager. My guess is I won't get back till May. That should be plenty of time, Rhoda."

IN HER mauve evening dress and fancy hairdo, Pamela Tudsbury clattered away at a typewriter. A knock came on the door.

"Bless my soul, that was quick!" She opened the door to Victor Henry, in a brown hat and topcoat, carrying an overnight bag. She walked to a coffee percolator on a small table. "Black, you drink it, with sugar, as I recall." She poured two cups and sat on the swivel chair by the typewriter.

"You look absurd," Pug said, taking another chair.

"Oh, I know, but this has to be ready by eight in the morning."

Pug relished being alone with her. He said gruffly, "Well, what's the dope on Ted Gallard?"

"Three RAF prisoners in his hospital in France escaped and made their way home. They said that after your visit Ted got special surveillance, and then was shipped, they think, to a prison camp in Germany. You can see why I've no desire to dance."

"It was my doing, then, that he didn't get out."

"That's ridiculous. I asked you to find out what you could. You relieved me of a couple of months of agonizing."

"Yes. You know he's alive, at least. Well—I guess I'll go along."

"Where to?"

"You know better than to ask that." He grinned.

"You're not leaving the country?"

He pointed at the small suitcase. "Hardly."

"Because in that case I might not see you for a long while. We're finishing up here soon."

Pug leaned forward. Pamela was, after all, almost as much of an insider as he was. "The President's had a bad sinus condition and a fever. He's taking the train to Hyde Park to rest up, strictly on the q.t. I'm to ride with him. I'd hoped he'd forgotten me."

She laughed. "You're not very forgettable, you know."

Pug stood up. "Thanks for the coffee, Pam."

"And you for a splendid dinner. Your wife's wonderful, Victor."

"Rhoda's all right. Nobody has to sell Rhoda to me."

Pamela peered at the typewriter.

"Maybe I'll see you before you go home," Pug said.

"That would be nice. I've missed you terribly. More so here than in London." As Pug paused with his hand on the doorknob, she looked up at him with eyes glistening. "Well? You don't want to keep the President waiting, Captain Henry."

THE President's car, so far as Pug could tell, was a regular pullman parlor car furnished to look like a living room. "Sit down, Pug!" The President waved from a lounge chair. "What'll you have? Whiskey sours are on the menu, because Harry drinks them all night long, but we can fix up almost anything."

"Whiskey sour will be fine, Mr. President. Thank you."

Harry Hopkins, slouching on a sofa, said, "Hello, Captain."

Though Roosevelt was supposed to be ill, Hopkins looked the worse of the two: lean, sunken-chested, gray of skin. The President's perky red bow tie went well with his gay, relaxed look.

As the train started in a slow glide, with no jolt and no noise, Roosevelt said, "Pug, do you know that poem that ends, 'There isn't a train I wouldn't take, no matter where it's going'? Golly,

just getting on this train has made me feel better." He coughed harshly. "If this were a ship, it would be better still."

"I prefer a ship too, sir."

"The old grievance, eh, sailor?"

"No, sir, truly not. I'm quite happy in War Plans."

"I'm glad." Eyebrows mischievously arched, the President went on, "Of course, I haven't the faintest notion what you're cooking up with those British fellows."

"So I understand, sir."

A steward passed a tray of drinks. The President took a tall glass of orange juice. "Doctor's orders. Lots and lots of fruit juice. I want to have a snack, and then try to sleep a little. Oh, Harry, tell them in the pantry that I want sturgeon and eggs, will you?"

Hopkins went forward and Roosevelt fixed Pug with a sharp look. "Pug, the U-boats keep working westward with this new wolf-pack tactic. The sinkings are outrunning the combined capacity of our shipyards and Britain's. You're aware of all that."

"I've been hearing plenty about it, yes, sir."

"The minute Lend-Lease passes, we'll be sending out a vast shipment of stuff, and none of it must land on the ocean floor."

Roosevelt's offhand remark about Lend-Lease surprised Victor Henry. "You think Lend-Lease *will* pass, sir?"

"Oh, it will pass," said the President. "But then what? Seventy ships are standing by to be loaded. This shipment has got to arrive. The problem is getting it as far as Iceland. From there the British can convoy, but not from here to Iceland. So what do we do?"

Victor Henry said uncomfortably, "Convoy, sir?"

The President shook his head heavily. "You know the answer on that, Pug, as of this moment."

In the Lend-Lease fight, convoying was a red-hot issue. The Lacouture group was screaming that if Lend-Lease passed, the warmongers would demand to convoy the ships that carried the supplies, and that that meant immediate war with Germany.

Roosevelt's grim face took on its mischievous look. "I've been thinking, however. Suppose a squadron of destroyers went out on an exercise, practicing convoy *procedures*. And suppose they were to travel with the shipment—strictly for drill purposes—just this

once? And to avoid complications, suppose all this were done highly informally, with no written orders? Don't you suppose the U-boats might be a bit discouraged to see sixteen or so United States destroyers out there screening those ships?"

"Discouraged, yes. Still, what happens will depend on their instructions, Mr. President."

"They've got instructions not to tangle with our warships," Roosevelt said, looking and sounding very hard. "That's obvious. And the ships may never even be sighted by the Germans before the British take over at Iceland. The North Atlantic weather's atrocious now. Pug, I want this thing done, and I'm thinking you might handle it and go out with the destroyers."

Captain Henry swallowed and said, "Aye aye, sir."

"It's very much like that airplane transfer you handled so well. Everything depends on doing it in the most unobtrusive way, with an absolute minimum of people in the know. I haven't even discussed this idea with Harry Hopkins. You're the first to hear it."

"Admiral Stark and Admiral King would have to know, of course, sir. And Commander, Support Force, and the officer in tactical command of the convoy screen. Everybody else in the exercise will just obey orders."

Roosevelt laughed. "Well! If you can keep it down to three admirals and one other officer, that will be swell."

"Mr. President, what do we do if a U-boat does attack?"

"This is a gamble that it won't happen. We *cannot* have a combat incident. Tell me, what do you honestly think of the idea?"

"Well, sir—to begin with, if those U-boats do see us, they'll be surprised. They'll radio for instructions. This is a policy decision that will have to go up to Hitler. That'll take time. I think the ships will get through without incident. But it'll only work once."

Roosevelt nodded. "But it's this first shipment that is crucial. Would you tell Harry on your way out that I'm more than ready to eat that sturgeon and eggs! And Pug, when you come back from that little sea jaunt, I want you and your family to come to dinner. Mrs. Roosevelt often speaks of you."

"Thank you, Mr. President. I'm very honored."

As Victor Henry prepared to leave, the President suddenly

said, "Pug, the best men I have around me keep urging me to declare war. They say it's inevitable, and that it's the only way to unite the people. I suppose you agree with them?"

"Yes, Mr. President, I do."

"It's a bad thing to go to war," said the President. "If the moment is coming, it isn't here. Meantime I shall just have to go on being called a warmonger, a coward, and a shillyshallyer, all rolled in one. That's how I earn my salary. Good night, Pug."

LEND-LEASE passed the Senate by sixty votes to thirty-one. Few Americans followed the debate more keenly than Pug Henry. Now, he thought, the President at last had the means to put the United States on a war footing. The new factories needed to make Lend-Lease planes and guns would in time arm the American forces that so far existed only on paper. The very day the bill passed, Pug was ordered to fly down to the Norfolk Navy Yard and report to Admiral Ernest King, a dragon he had not met before.

King sat behind a desk in his flag quarters on the battleship *Texas*, his sleeves stiff to the elbow with gold. He had a thin, weathered face and a narrow shiny pate. Behind him hung a chart of the Atlantic, with bold black letters in one corner, **COMMANDER IN CHIEF, ATLANTIC FLEET**.

He motioned Pug to a seat. "I received a telephone call from the chief of naval operations yesterday," he said, "that one Captain Victor Henry of War Plans would report to me directly from the President of the United States. Well? State your business."

Pug told Admiral King what Franklin Roosevelt desired.

"So! You're prepared to get the United States into this war all by yourself, are you, Captain?" said the admiral. "Well, that's one way for an obscure person to go down in history."

"Admiral, it's the President's judgment that this exercise will go off without incident."

"So you said. Well, suppose his judgment's wrong? Suppose a U-boat fires a fish at you? What then?"

"If we're fired on, sir, why, I propose to fire back. That won't start a war unless Hitler wants war."

Ernest King nodded peevishly. "Well, I tend to agree with Mr.

Roosevelt that it very likely won't happen now." After looking Victor Henry over like a dog he was considering buying, King picked up the telephone. "Get me Admiral Bristol. . . . Hello? Admiral, I'm sending to your office Captain Victor Henry, a special observer from War Plans. He will visit Desron Eight and conduct surprise drills, inspections, and maneuvers, to test combat readiness. He is to be regarded as my assistant chief of staff, with appropriate authority. . . . Affirmative. Within the hour."

Staring at Pug, he spoke in a formal drone. "Captain, you are to form out of Desron Eight an antisubmarine screen, and proceed to sea to conduct realistic tests and drills. This includes forming up screens on cooperative merchant vessels which you may encounter. I desire you to keep security at a maximum and paper work at a minimum. For that reason my instructions are verbal."

"Understood, Admiral."

Ernest King reverted to his natural voice. "In the event of an incident, it will be a hanging party for all hands. That will be all."

EVEN in the North Atlantic in March, even in a destroyer, even on such risky business, going back to sea was a tonic. Pug paced the bridge of USS *Plunkett* a happy man.

On clear nights he spent hours alone on the flying bridge. The broad dark ocean, the crowded stars arching overhead, always made him feel what the Bible called the spirit of God hovering on the face of the waters. Down the years, this religious awe inspired by nights at sea had kept Captain Henry a believer. On this voyage, too, the Almighty was there for him in the starry universe.

Pug kept to his official role of observer and left operations to Commander Baldwin, who headed the destroyer screen. He interfered only once. On the second day after the join-up off Newfoundland, the long ragged columns of merchant ships plowed into a snowstorm. Plunging up and down over huge black waves, ships a mile apart were losing sight of each other. After several reports of near collisions in the zigzags, Pug called Baldwin and the British liaison officer into his sea cabin.

"I've been figuring," he said. "We can gain an advance of half a day by proceeding on a straight course. Maybe there are U-boats



out there in all that stuff. But if they're going to try to penetrate this screen—well, with seventy-one juicy crawling targets, zigzagging won't help much. Let's head straight for Point Baker, turn over this hot potato, and skedaddle."

Commander Baldwin grinned. "Concur, Captain."

Pug called the British signal officer in from the bridge. "Give your commodore a flag hoist: 'Discontinue zigzagging.'"

Every morning the screen conducted combat drills. Their ragged style enraged Pug, but he resisted the temptation to take over and work these units hard; to maintain the dull calm of the operation was paramount. Unmolested, the first Lend-Lease convoy steamed straight eastward. Whether U-boats saw it and laid low because of the American destroyers, or whether it got through undetected, Pug never knew. They arrived at Point Baker, the rendezvous off Iceland, without a single episode of alarm.

A feeble yellow sun was just rising. The convoy began steaming in a pattern ten miles square, waiting for the British. Victor Henry stood on the flying bridge peering eastward, hoping that the *Plunkett's* navigator knew his job. After three hours, the first hulls began to show above the horizon, due east. As the motley British screen of destroyers, frigates, and corvettes came on, the leading ship blinked a yellow light. A signalman on the *Plunkett* brought Pug a penciled scrawl: "Thanks Yanks. Cupboard is bare."

Pug grunted. "Send him 'Eat hearty. More coming'—and sign it 'Mother Hubbard.'"

The grinning sailor said, "Aye aye, sir."

"As an observer," Pug said to Commander Baldwin, "I would now be pleased to observe how fast your signal gang can hoist 'Reverse course, make thirty-two knots.'"

"HENRY! Hey, Henry!"

Byron groaned, went rigid as a stretching cat, and opened one eye. Lieutenant Caruso was used to this waking pattern of Ensign Henry. Until he went rigid there was no rousing him.

"Your father is here."

"What?" Byron reared up on an elbow.

"He's in the wardroom. Care to join us?"

In his underwear, unshaved and blinking, Byron stumbled to the doorway of the tiny wardroom. "Holy cow. You *are* here."

Immaculate in dress blues, Victor Henry frowned at his son. "What the devil are you doing in the sack at noon?"

"I had the midwatch. Excuse me, sir, be right back." Byron quickly reappeared, shaved and in freshly starched khaki. Victor Henry was alone. "Gosh, Dad, it's good to see you."

"Briny, a midwatch isn't major surgery. You're not supposed to take to your bed to recover."

"Sir, I had it two nights in a row. Say, this *is* a surprise. Mom said you were at sea. Have you been detached from War Plans?"

"No, this was a temporary thing. I'm heading back now. I was reporting to Admiral King in the *Texas*, and I saw the S-45 on the Norfolk yard roster. How goes it?"

"Oh, first-rate. Swell bunch of guys. The skipper is 4.0, and the exec, I'd really like you to meet him. He was a witness at my wedding." Byron grinned. "I'm glad to see you. I'm lonesome."

"What about your wife? Is she on her way home yet?"

Byron gave his father a veiled glance that hinted at his standing grudge about Natalie. But he responded amiably. "I don't know. We got in from maneuvers this morning. The yeoman just went for the mail."

"Incidentally, if you are in port on the twenty-sixth, and can get overnight leave, you're invited to dinner at the White House. All of us are, but I don't suppose Warren can fly in from Pearl Harbor."

Byron's eyes opened wide. "Dad, how do we rate?"

Victor Henry shrugged. "Oh, a carrot for the donkey. Your mother doesn't know about it yet."

"No? Mom will go clear through the overhead."

Lieutenant Aster, carrying a basket of mail, poked his head into the wardroom. "Briny, the yeoman's got a fistful of letters for you at the gangway."

"Hey. Good. This is my exec, Dad, Lieutenant Carter Aster. Be right back." Byron vanished.

Seating himself at the narrow wardroom table, Aster said, "Excuse me, sir. Priority mail."

"Go ahead." Victor Henry studied the blond officer as he at-

tacked the letters. He looked efficient. Aster traversed the pile fast, then pushed the basket aside and poured coffee.

"Lieutenant, you were a witness at Briny's wedding?"

"Yes, sir. She's a wonderful girl."

"How's Briny doing? Let me have it straight."

Aster's smile disappeared. "Well—we all like him. There's something about Briny. I guess you know that. But for submarines—he could measure up, but he just won't bother."

The words hurt. "People run true to form, I guess."

"He knows his way around the boat, sir, he knows the engines, the compressed-air system, all that. He stands a good diving watch. He has a knack for trimming the boat. But when it comes to writing reports on time, or keeping track of the crew's training books—an officer's main work—forget it." Aster looked Byron's father in the eye. "The skipper sometimes talks of beaching him."

Victor Henry said sadly, "That bad?"

"In a way he's kind of nuts, too."

"How, nuts?"

"Well, last week we had this surprise inspector aboard. We fired a dummy torpedo and surfaced to recover it. It was a rough sea and the torpedo was bobbing up and down, banging and crashing against the hull. The torpedo detail messed about for an hour and couldn't hook it. The skipper was exploding. Briny was the officer on that detail. Suddenly he took the hook, and damned if he didn't go and jump on that torpedo! He hung on, with these icy waves breaking over him, riding that thing like a bronco. He secured the hook and then got knocked off. Well, we hauled him in half dead and then hoisted the fish aboard."

Pug cleared his throat. "He took a stupid chance."

"Sir, I'd like to have him on any boat I ever command. But I'd expect to wear out two pairs of heavy shoes, kicking his ass."

"She's pregnant!" Byron shot in brandishing a letter. "Natalie's pregnant, Dad. Hey, Lady, how about that?"

"Fast work," said Aster. "You better get her home for sure, now. Pleasure to meet you, Captain. Excuse me."

"Any news on her coming home?" Victor Henry asked.

"They should be on their way by—well, maybe by now! She'd

better be. My kid's going to be born in the United States, Dad."

Victor Henry stood, putting a hand on his son's shoulder. "That's great news, Briny. Great."

RHODA was in turmoil. Kirby had returned from England in April, while Pug was at sea. In Virginia and North Carolina, where they went on a four-day trip, the countryside was flooded with fragrant cherry blossoms. Rhoda came back to Washington committed to leave her husband and to marry Kirby.

The decision seemed simple and natural while Kirby was with her. But when he went off to Denver to put the big old house in order, leaving her in a home full of Henry mementos, the simplicity of the vision and some of its charm began to fade.

Rhoda's desire to keep her good opinion of herself added to her confusion. In her own mind, she was a good woman caught up in a grand passion which consumed all moral law. She still liked—perhaps loved—Pug, but his career was a growing disappointment. While her friends were preening over their husbands' new sea-going commands, she was the wife of a man who evidently didn't have it. This was bitter medicine. With such thoughts Rhoda was working herself up to tell Pug that she had fallen in love with another man. But she teetered, ready to be pushed either way.

She missed his return from the convoy trip. He had not telephoned from Norfolk, for he knew that she liked to sleep late. He arrived to find the house empty—cook off, Rhoda out, mail overflowing his desk. It was a cold homecoming. He put a note on her dressing table and left for the War Plans office.

There, by chance, he encountered Pamela Tudsbury. She had not gone back to England with Burne-Wilke, though she had wanted to. Secretaries cleared for Very Secret were rare, so the British Purchasing Commission had requisitioned her. Springlike and refreshingly unmilitary in a yellow-and-green cotton frock, she greeted him with the warmth he had not found at home. "The sea obviously agrees with you," she said. "You look splendid."

He asked for news of Ted, but there was none, and they parted with a casual good-by. All the rest of the day, plowing through a mound of accumulated paper, Victor Henry felt much better.

Rhoda was waiting for him in a bright red dress, with ice and drink mixes ready. Her manner struck him as strange. She gabbled about houses. That afternoon, finding Pug's note, she had rushed out with an agent and visited three. If only she could convince him that she had been diligently looking at houses, she felt her tracks would be covered. This made no sense when she was planning to break the news to him, but she acted on nervous instinct.

At dinner, Pug broke in on the flow of words to tell her of the President's invitation. Her mouth fell open. "Pug! Really?" She asked many questions, worried out loud over what she would wear, and gloated about other navy wives' reactions to *this!*

She was at her very worst. Pug found himself judging his wife detachedly—a scrutiny few wives in their forties can weather.

That night Pug recognized familiar signals that he was not welcome in her bedroom. He did not know why; but he had long ago decided that Rhoda was entitled to these spells. It took him a long time to fall asleep. He kept thinking of the callous happy-go-lucky mood he had found in the capital, the sense that by passing the Lend-Lease Bill, America had done its bit to stamp out nazism. Nobody appeared to care how much stuff was actually being produced and shipped. Under an amazing welter of meetings, talk, and mimeographed releases, Lend-Lease was paralyzed.

MEANWHILE, the war news was worsening. The Germans had blitzed Yugoslavia in one week. Greece had surrendered, and the Germans had trapped a large British force there. They were sinking ships at a great rate, showering England with fire bombings worse than any during 1940, gaining victories in North Africa, and launching a breathtaking airborne invasion of Crete over the heads of the British Mediterranean fleet. This outpouring of military energy to all points of the compass was awesome. In the face of it, Vichy France was negotiating a deal that would hand over French North Africa to the Nazis. This was a bloody nose for American diplomats trying to hold France neutral and keep the Germans out of the African bulge at French Dakar, which dominated the whole South Atlantic.

And still the United States did nothing. Even in inner War

Plans circles, a split was widening between the army and the navy. The navy wanted strong, fast moves in the North Atlantic to save England: convoys, the occupation of Iceland, shipment of all possible arms. But the army, which now gave England only three months before collapse, preferred a move into Brazil and the Azores, to face the expected Nazi thrust in the South Atlantic. Between these two plans the President was stalling and hesitating.

Then came the scarifying news that the *Bismarck*, a new German battleship, had blown up England's mighty war vessel, the *Hood*, off Greenland, with a single salvo at thirteen miles, and vanished into the North Atlantic mists. This jolted the country out of its Maytime languor. It seemed that Hitler was achieving mastery of the oceans as well as the land and the air.

"WHAT do you think, Dad? Will the Limeys get the *Bismarck*?"

It was the evening of the White House dinner. Perched on the edge of the bathtub, Byron watched his father shave, as he had countless times as a child.

"Well, Briny, they claim the *Prince of Wales* winged her. But the *Bismarck's* a floating steel honeycomb. If she was hit, they probably just buttoned up the flooded compartments and lit out for home. The British are throwing everything into their search. Aircraft ought to find her. Unless she is undamaged. In which case, heaven keep any convoys she runs across."

"I wish I were in that search," said Byron.

"Do you?" Pug gave his son a pleased look.

Byron followed him into his dressing room. "Dad, I got a letter from Natalie. She's stuck, after all."

Buttoning his dress shirt, Pug frowned at the mirror. "Why?"

"The same foolishness, about when her uncle's father was naturalized. He just can't get that passport renewed. One official makes promises and the next one fudges on them. They'd even bought steamship tickets. Dad, they're ringed by Germans now—in France, Yugoslavia, Greece, North Africa, and for that matter all through Italy. They're a couple of Jews."

"I'm aware of that," said Victor Henry.

Rhoda called from the bedroom, "Pug, will you come here?"

He found her glaring at a full-length mirror, in a tight blue silk dress, the back of which hung open. "Hook me up. Look how my stomach is bulging. The stupid dress looked fine in the store."

"You're not bulging. You look very pretty." Pug closed the snaps and went back to the dressing room.

Byron still sat there. "Dad, I thought you might mention this thing to the President."

"That's an unreasonable notion," Pug said curtly. He was jarred by the hostility on his son's face. "Byron, I don't think your wife's uncle's citizenship mess is a suitable problem to submit to the President of the United States."

"Oh, I knew you wouldn't do it. You're sore at me for marrying a Jew and you don't care what happens to her."

A TALL Negro in a colorful uniform opened the door, and the Henrys stepped into the dazzling marble-floored foyer of the White House. There, a middle-aged man in a dinner jacket introduced himself as the chief usher. "Mrs. Henry, you will be sitting on the President's left," he said. "You see, Crown Princess Marta of Norway is a houseguest. She will sit on his right."

"Oh, yes, yes. Princess Marta? She ranks me, all right," said Rhoda with a nervous giggle.

"Please come this way." He left them in the public Red Room.

"Oh, dear, think of Warren missing all this!" Rhoda peered at the paintings of Presidents.

"It's like walking into a history book," Madeline said.

"The thought of actually keeping house here!" said Rhoda. Despite themselves they were all speaking in hushed voices.

"May I present Mr. Sumner Welles?" The chief usher led in a bald, lean, gloomy man. "And I believe we can go upstairs now," he added, as the Under Secretary of State shook hands with them.

An elevator took them up. Behind his desk, at one end of an enormous yellow room, sat the President, rattling a cocktail shaker. "Hello there, just in time for the first round!" he called. "I hope Mrs. Henry likes Orange Blossoms, Pug. Good evening, Sumner." The President gave all the Henrys firm handshakes.

In the center of the room, Eleanor Roosevelt stood drinking

cocktails with a tall, black-haired woman and a sharp-faced, aged little man. The usher introduced the Henrys to Mrs. Roosevelt, to Princess Marta, and to Mr. Somerset Maugham. When Rhoda heard the author's name, her stiff manner broke. "Oh my! Mr. Maugham! What a surprise. I love your books."

The author stammered, "Tha-that's charming of you."

"Anything new on the *Bismarck*, Sumner?" the President asked.

"Not since about five o'clock, sir."

"What do you say, Pug? Will they get her?"

"It's a tough exercise, Mr. President. Mighty big ocean. But if they winged her, as they claim, they ought to catch her."

The war talk continued while they drank their cocktails. Then Mrs. Roosevelt led her guests toward the door. They left the President and followed her to the elevator. When they arrived in the dining room, there sat Franklin Roosevelt, already whisked to his place at the head of the table.

"Well, I had a good day!" he exclaimed, as they sat down. "The Ford company finally promised to make Liberators in their huge new plant. The business people seem to be waking up at last." He started on his soup, and everyone else began to eat. "Mr. Maugham, there's good news to pass on! By next fall, we'll be making five hundred heavy bombers a month. That's hard intelligence."

"Sir, the—hard intelligence is"—Maugham's stammer caught everybody's attention—"that you *s-say* you'll be making them."

The President roared with laughter. "Mr. Maugham was a British spy in the last war, Pug," he said. "Watch out, what you say here. It'll get right back to Churchill."

"M-Mr. President, I am not a f-f-ferret now, I assure you, but a lower form of life. A-a-a sponge."

"Captain Henry was in the intelligence business too, Willie," Roosevelt said to Maugham. "He was naval attaché in Berlin. He predicted that pact between Hitler and Stalin before it happened. What is it now, Pug? Will Hitler attack Russia?"

"Mr. President, after that bit of luck, I hocked my crystal ball."

"What do you think, Sumner?" the President said.

"If one studies *Mein Kampf*," said Welles, "the attack is inevitable, sooner or later."

Mrs. Roosevelt said, "Mr. Maugham—if Germany does attack the Soviet Union, will England help Russia?"

The author paused. "I—I can't really say."

"Sumner," said Roosevelt, "do you suppose we could explain it to the American people if the British did not help Russia?"

"I think that would finish off aid to England, Mr. President. If Hitler is a menace to mankind, that's one thing. If he's just a menace to the British Empire, that's something very different."

With a brief look at the British author, the President said, "Well! Shall I slice some more lamb?"

"I will thank you for some, Mr. President," said Princess Marta. "Of course, Hitler may be massing troops in the east to keep Stalin out of the Rumanian oil fields. Hitler certainly needs that oil."

"But it all boils down to Hitler's impulses nowadays," said the President. "And we have here two men who've talked face-to-face with the fellow. Sumner, do you think Hitler is a madman?"

"I looked hard for such evidence, Mr. President. But I found him a cool, knowledgeable advocate with considerable charm."

"How about you, Pug?"

"Mr. President, don't misunderstand me. But to me, so far, all heads of state are more alike than they are different."

Roosevelt looked taken aback, then he guffawed. "Well! That's something! At my own table, I've been compared with Hitler!"

"But it's the truth. He has a very powerful presence, sir, face-to-face, with a fantastic memory and a remarkable ability to marshal facts as he talks. He gives his people just what they want. And he has an impressive ability to act different parts."

Rhoda blurted, "Pug, when on earth did you have a talk with Hitler? That's news to me." Laughter swept the table. She turned on Roosevelt. "Honestly, to keep something like *that* from me!"

"You didn't need to know," Pug said.

"C-captain," said Maugham, "I bow to a p-p-professional."

Roosevelt said, "My dear Rhoda, you couldn't have paid your husband a handsomer compliment in public."

"I didn't intend to. Imagine!" She darted a tender look at Pug.

"I expect great things of Pug," said the President.

"I always have, Mr. President."

"Not everybody deserves such a beautiful wife," Roosevelt said, with a decidedly human glance at her, "but he does, Rhoda."

Rhoda, with the oldest instinct in the world, looked toward Mrs. Roosevelt, in conversation with Welles. Madeline, on the other side of Welles, was talking to Maugham. Byron, between Princess Marta and a deaf old lady named Delano, sat silent, withdrawn.

The President said, "We haven't heard from our submariner here. Byron, you're a natural for the silent service." The young officer gave him a melancholy smile. "Are you ready to go to war?"

"Personally, sir, I'm more than ready."

"Well, that's the spirit."

Victor Henry interposed, "Byron was in Poland when the war began. He was strafed by a Luftwaffe plane and wounded."

"I see," said the President. "Well, you have a motive then for wanting to fight Germans."

"That's not it so much, Mr. President. The thing is that my wife is trapped in Italy."

Roosevelt appeared startled. "Trapped? How, trapped?"

Everybody at the table looked at Byron. The atmosphere was thick with curiosity. Byron said, "Her uncle is Dr. Aaron Jastrow, the author of *A Jew's Jesus*. He's had some trouble about his passport. He's old and not well, and she won't abandon him."

Mrs. Roosevelt put in with a smile, "Why, Franklin, remember we both read his book? We liked it very much indeed."

"Dr. Jastrow taught at Yale, Mrs. Roosevelt," Byron said. "He's lived here most of his life. It's just crazy red tape."

"*A Jew's Jesus* is a good book," said the President, in a flat tone. "Sumner, couldn't you have somebody look into this?"

"Certainly, Mr. President."

"Let me know what you find out." Roosevelt resumed eating.

For a long time nobody spoke. Then the door to the hallway opened and a navy commander entered. He handed the President a slip of paper. "Well!" Roosevelt took a dramatic pause. "It seems they've got the *Bismarck*!"

"Ah!" The crown princess bounced in her chair, clapping like a girl, amid an excited babble.

The President raised his glass. "To the Royal Navy."

NEXT MORNING, when Pug had left, Rhoda wrote a short note: "Palmer, dear—You have a kindly heart that understands without explanations. I can't do it. I realize we can't see each other for a long while, but I hope we will be friends forever. My love and everlasting thanks for offering me more than I deserve and can accept. I'll never forget. Forgive me. Rhoda."

She went out in the rain and mailed it.

That same morning, shortly before noon, a buzzer sounded on Victor Henry's desk. "Yes?" he said into the intercom.

"The office of Mr. Sumner Welles is calling, sir."

Welles' secretary said, "Oh, Captain Henry. The Under Secretary is most anxious to see you today, if you happen to be free."

Deciding to skip lunch, Pug said, "I can come now."

When he arrived at Welles' office, the secretary said, "My, you got here fast, Captain. The Under Secretary is with Secretary Hull. He says do you mind talking to Mr. Whitman?"

She led him to the small office of Aloysius R. Whitman, a minor official in European Affairs. "The Under Secretary thanks you for taking the time to come over," Whitman said genially. He gestured at a chair. "Well, now. Dr. Jastrow's passport. It's no problem whatever. The authorization was sent out a while ago. We checked by cable with Rome. Dr. Jastrow can have his passport any time he'll come down from Siena to pick it up."

"Good. My son will be mighty glad to hear it."

"Oh yes. About your son." Whitman rose and leaned casually on the edge of his desk, as though to make the chat less official. "I hope you'll take this in the right spirit. The Under Secretary was disconcerted to have this raised at the President's dinner table."

"Naturally. I was mighty jarred myself."

"I'm glad you feel that way. Suppose you just drop a note to the President, sort of apologizing, and mentioning that you've learned it was all taken care of long ago?"

"An unsolicited letter from me? But he asked for a report from Mr. Welles."

Whitman gave him the brightest of smiles. "We went to a rather dramatic effort this morning, Captain, just to make sure young Mrs. Henry could get home. Literally thousands of these cases of

Jewish refugees come to us. Now your family problem is settled. We hoped you'd be more appreciative."

Pug sensed an unpleasant nuance in the way he said "your family." "These two aren't Jewish refugees, they're Americans."

"There was apparently a serious question as to whether Aaron Jastrow was technically an American. Now we've cleared it up. In return I really think you should write that letter."

"I'd like to oblige you, but as I say, I wasn't asked to address the President on this subject." Pug got to his feet.

Whitman confronted him. "Let me be frank. The Under Secretary wants a report from me, for him to forward to the President. But a word from you would conclude the matter."

"I'll tell you, I might even write it, if I could find out why Jastrow got stopped by a technicality when he wanted to come home. That's what the President wants to know. But I can't give him the answer. Can you?" Whitman looked blank. "Okay. Whoever was responsible had better try to explain. Good-by."

From a booth in the lobby he telephoned the Norfolk Navy Yard and sent a message to the S-45.

Byron called him late in the afternoon. "*Eeyow!* No kidding, Dad! How marvelous. Now if she can only get on a plane or a boat! But she will. Dad, be honest. Was I right to talk to the President?"

"You had one hell of a nerve. Now I'm damned busy and I hope you are. Get back to work."

30

"THEREFORE . . . I have tonight issued a proclamation that an unlimited national emergency exists and requires the strengthening of our defense to the extreme limit of our national power and authority . . ." Roosevelt's voice rose to a note of passion. "I repeat the words of the signers of the Declaration of Independence . . . 'With a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor!'"

"It's far more than I expected," Pug said, when he snapped the radio off. "He finally did it!"

Rhoda said, "Funny. I thought he just pussyfooted around."

"Pussyfooted! Weren't you listening? We are placing our armed forces in position . . . we will use them to repel attack . . . an unlimited national emergency exists . . ."

"What does it all mean?" Rhoda yawned on the chaise longue.

"We convoy right away. That's for starters."

"Makes me wonder," said Rhoda, "whether we should pursue those houses. They'll give you a sea command if it's war."

"Who knows? In any case, we need a home base."

"I suppose so. Have you thought which house you'd want?"

Pug grimaced. Here was an old dilemma. Twice before they had bought a bigger house in Washington than he could afford, with Rhoda's money. "I like the N Street house."

"But that means no guest room, and very little entertaining."

"Look, if your heart's set on Foxhall Road, okay."

"We'll see, honey." Rhoda stood. "Coming to bed?" she purred.

"Be right up." Pug did not know why he was back in her good graces, or why he had ever fallen out. After the President's broadcast he was too preoccupied to dwell on that. It was a whole new situation now, and Pug thought the decision to convoy would galvanize the country. He went upstairs humming.

THE YEOMAN's voice on the intercom was apologetic. "Sir, beg your pardon. Will you talk to Mr. Alistair Tudsbury?" Victor Henry, sweating out an urgent report on convoying for the chief of naval operations, growled, "Yes, put him on. . . . Hello?"

"Am I disturbing you, dear boy? That's quite a bark."

"No, not at all. What's up?"

"What do you make of the President's press conference?"

"I didn't know he'd had one."

"You *are* busy. Ask your office to get you the afternoon papers."

"Wait, here they are." The yeoman was bringing them in. The headlines read: NO CONVOYS—FDR and "UNLIMITED EMERGENCY" MERELY A WARNING—NO POLICY CHANGES.

Skimming the front pages, Pug saw that Roosevelt had blandly taken back his radio speech, claiming the reporters had misunderstood it. Tudsbury said, "Well? Tell me something encouraging."

"I thought I understood Franklin Roosevelt," Pug muttered.

"Victor, people in England have been dancing in the streets over last night's speech. Now I have to broadcast about this."

"I don't envy you."

"Can you come over for a drink?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Please try. Pam's leaving."

"What?"

"She's going home, leaving on a boat tonight. She's been pestering them for weeks to let her return."

"Let me call you back."

He telephoned the office of the chief of naval operations and discovered that, following the President's press conference, the convoy report was no longer needed by tonight.

"THE FUNNY part is," Pug said to Tudsbury, "Rhoda said he pussyfooted around. I was taken in."

"Maybe it needs a woman to follow that devious mind. Pam, Pug's here to say good-by to you. Come in and have your drink."

"Just a minute." They could see her moving in the hall, carrying clothes, books, and valises here and there.

They sat in the living room of Tudsbury's apartment off Connecticut Avenue. Tudsbury, sprawling on a sofa, heaved a sigh. "I shall be alone again. There's a girl who is all self, self, self."

"Family trait," called a dulcet voice.

"Shut up. Please, Pug, give me something comforting to say in this broadcast. What's happened to Roosevelt? He *knows* the shipping losses of the past three months. He *knows* that with Crete and the Balkans mopped up, the Luftwaffe will come back at us, double its size of last year. What the devil?"

"I'll have my drink now," said Pamela, striding in. "Don't you think you should be going, Talky?"

He held his tumbler out to her. "One more. I have never been more reluctant to face a microphone. My tongue will cleave to the roof of my mouth."

"Oh yes. Just as it's doing now." Pamela took his glass and Pug's to the small wheeled bar.

"Thanks, Pam," Pug said. "I agree with you, Tudsbury. The President's policy is disaster. Cheers."

"Cheers. Yes, and it's *your* disaster. This is a contest now between Germany and the United States. We were too slow and too stupid. But we did our best. You're doing nothing, in the last inning." He swallowed his drink and pulled himself to his feet.

"The United States Navy is ready," Pug shot back. "I've been working all day on a general operation order for convoy—"

"Good God, man, can I say that? Can I say that your navy is ready to go over to convoy and expects to do it soon?"

Pug hesitated only a second. "Sure, say it! You can hear that from anybody in the service. Who doesn't know that?"

"The British, that's who. You've saved me." Tudsbury rounded on his daughter. "And you told me not to call him, you baggage! Blazes, I'm late." The fat man lumbered out.

Pam sat with her back to the window. The sun in her brown hair made an aureole around her sad face.

"Why did you tell him not to phone me?"

She looked embarrassed. "I meant to ring you before I left." She handed him a mimeographed document. "Have you seen this?"

It was the British War Office's instructions to civilians for dealing with German invaders. Pug said, leafing through it, "It's nervy of you to go back."

"Not in the least. I feel so bloody guilty." Pamela wrung her fingers in her lap. "I just can't wait to go. There's a girl in the office who's gone dotty over a married man. An American. And she has a fiancé in the RAF. I have to live with her maudlin agonizing."

"What does this American do?"

"He's a civilian. I don't know what she sees in him. I've met him."

Pug rattled the ice in his glass. "Funny, there's this fellow I know," he said. "Navy fellow. He's been married for more than a quarter of a century, fine grown family. Well, he ran into this girl, and he can't get her out of his mind. There's nothing wrong with his wife. Still, he keeps dreaming about this girl. All he does is dream. He wouldn't hurt his wife for the world. Just as silly as this friend of yours. There are millions of such people."

"He sounds like somebody I might like." Her voice was kind.

From outside came the sound of a hand organ. "Listen!" Pam jumped up and looked out the window. Below, the organ-grinder was almost hidden in a crowd of children. Pug was at her side, and she slipped her hand in his. "Let's go down and watch the monkey. There must be one."

"Sure."

"First let me kiss you good-by. On the street, I can't." She put her arms around him and kissed his mouth while the music of the hurdy-gurdy jangled. "What is that song?" she said.

"It's called 'Yes! We Have No Bananas.' I love you," said Victor Henry, considerably surprising himself.

Her eyes looked deep into his. "I love you. Come."

On the street, in the hot late sunshine, the children were squealing and shouting as the monkey turned somersaults. The animal ran to Victor Henry and took off its little red hat and held it out. He dropped in a quarter. Taking the coin and biting it, the monkey somersaulted back to his master and dropped the coin in a box.

"If that critter could be taught to salute," said Pug, "he might have a hell of a naval career."

Pamela seized his hand. "You're doing as much as anybody I know—*anybody*—about this accursed war."

"Well, Pam, have a safe trip home." He kissed her hand and walked rapidly off, leaving her among the children.

A COUPLE of days later, Victor Henry received an order to escort to the Memorial Day parade the oldest naval survivor of the Civil War. This struck him as strange, but he pushed aside a mound of work to obey. He picked the man up at a veterans' home and drove with him to the reviewing stand on Pennsylvania Avenue.

President Roosevelt's white linen suit and white straw hat glared in the bright sun as he sat in his open car beside the stand. He gave the tottering ancient a strong handshake and bellowed, "How would you like to watch the parade with me?"

"Better than—hee-hee—marching in it."

"Come along. Come on, Pug, you sit with me too. The navy's my favorite," Roosevelt said, as blue Annapolis ranks swung by. "Don't tell any army men I said so! By the way, whom can I send to Lon-

don to head up our convoy command? We'll call him a special naval observer or something until we get things started."

Pug was astounded. "Sir, *are* we going to convoy?"

"You know perfectly well we've got to."

"When, Mr. President?"

The President smiled wearily at Pug's bitter emphasis. He fumbled in his pocket. "I had an interesting chat with General Marshall this morning." He showed Victor Henry a chit of paper, scrawled with his own handwriting, headed "Combat Readiness, June 1, 1941." It showed the army ground forces to be thirteen percent ready and the army air corps zero percent prepared!

Pug, reading these frustrating figures while the marine band blared out "The Stars and Stripes Forever," in that moment understood the President as well as he ever would. Roosevelt handed him another chit while taking the salute of the marine formation.

"And here's another figure, Pug. On the day after my speech, *eighty-two* percent of our people didn't want to go to war. *Eighty-two percent*. If we get into war—and convoying might just do it!—Hitler will at once walk into French West Africa. He'll have the Luftwaffe at Dakar, where they can jump over to Brazil. He'll put new submarine pens there, too."

The navy veteran, who had been dozing in the sun, was sitting up now, working his bony jaws and loose sunken mouth. "Fine parade. I still remember marching past President Lincoln," he said.

The President waved as a brown mass of Boy Scouts went stepping by. "Well? What about London, Pug? The fact is, I was considering you. Think about it, will you?"

Pug felt dizzy. "Aye aye, sir," he said.

Pug returned the old sailor to the veterans' home and went back to a piled-up desk. He got through a high heap of work and walked home, to give himself a chance to think. *London! London! London! Pamela!* thundered in his head, and he walked in his front door humming "Yes! We Have No Bananas."

"Hey, what the heck?" he exclaimed, as he entered the living room. "Champagne? Whose birthday is it?"

"Can't you guess?" Rhoda's eyes glittered with tears. "It's Victor Henry's birthday."

"Are you potted? Mine's in March."

"Pug, at four o'clock this afternoon Janice had a boy and his name is Victor Henry. And I'm a doddering old grandmother. And I love it. Oh, Pug!" Rhoda threw herself in his arms.

They talked about the great event over the champagne, downing the bottle much too fast. Rhoda had raced up to the naval hospital to see Janice and the baby. "The little elephant weighed nine and a half whole pounds! And he's the image of you, Pug."

"Poor kid. He'll have no luck with the women."

"I like that!" exclaimed Rhoda. "Didn't you have luck? Anyway, Janice won't take him back to Hawaii just yet. So they'll stay with us, and that makes the house decision urgent. I got that old lady in Foxhall Road to come down five thousand! I say let's grab it. Sweetie, let's enjoy these coming years, let's wither in style, side by side, Grandma and Grandpa Henry. And let's always have lots of room for the grandchildren."

Victor Henry stared at his wife for such a long time that she began to feel odd. He heaved a deep sigh. "Well, I'll tell you, Grandma. I couldn't agree with you more. Let's go to Foxhall Road by all means. And there we'll wither, side by side. Well said."

"Oh, I love you! Now let me see about dinner." She hurried out.

Pug upended the champagne bottle over his glass, but only a drop ran out as he sang softly, "*We have no bananas today.*"

Three weeks later the Germans invaded the Soviet Union.

31

The Turn East: Operation Barbarossa

From "World Empire Lost"

Translator's note: The world still wonders why Adolf Hitler turned east in June 1941, when he had England hanging on the ropes and when the United States was impotent to stop the knockout. It appeared then that Hitler had the war all but won. With England mopped up, he could have proceeded to take on the Soviet Union in a one-front war. Instead, he turned east, unloosed the biggest bloodbath in history, left his rear open to the Normandy landing, and destroyed himself and Germany. Why? General von Roon's answer is interesting.

—V.H.

Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union is widely regarded as his greatest blunder. The main reason for this view is that people won't bother to look at a map. Napoleon faltered in his Russian campaign partly from a shortage of fodder for his horses. Similarly, without oil for fuel, the whole German war machine was but a mountain of dead iron. The only oil available to us lay underneath Rumania. All of Hitler's Balkan maneuvers and campaigns of 1940-41 therefore revolved around the Ploesti oil fields. Now Ploesti lies dangerously near the Soviet border, but it is six hundred miles from Germany.

For this reason, when war between Hungary and Rumania threatened in July of 1940, Hitler acted fast to force a settlement. The Soviet Union did not like this. The Red Army moved to the banks of the River Prut, to within a hundred miles of our oil. At the same time, Bulgaria, with a border only fifty miles from Ploesti, began to make territorial demands and military threats. We had hard intelligence that Russia was behind these gestures.



These ominous developments gave Hitler pause. His pact with Stalin he regarded as just a truce, for in his program Russia was the doorway through which Germany would enter world dominion, and he had to assume that Stalin would also so regard it. The question was, When would Russia move against Germany? On this he couldn't afford to take a chance. After Russia's tightening squeeze play on Ploëști, he ordered staff work begun on an invasion of the Soviet Union.

Clausewitz says, "We may . . . establish it as a principle that if we conquer all our enemies by conquering one of them, the defeat of that one must be the aim of the . . . whole war." The conquest of Russia—the central land mass of the earth, with its limitless manpower and resources—was such an aim. Once it and the European continent were in Germany's grasp, Hitler reasoned that the Anglo-Saxon sea powers would perforce change their leaders to men who could get along with German world rule.

Our bid for world empire was always a race against time. Germany was much smaller than its two great rivals, the Soviet Union and the United States. Its advantage lay only in its unity of purpose, its discipline, and the forceful leadership of Hitler. By 1941 it was clear that Roosevelt intended to get into the battle as soon as he could convert his industries to war and delude his unwilling countrymen into following him; and it was equally clear that Stalin was only seeking a safe, cowardly way to strangle Germany at Ploëști. As Hitler wrote in a letter to Mussolini on June 21, the eve of the invasion: "I have therefore . . . finally decided to cut the noose before it can be drawn tight."

Hitler's strategy was Napoleonic, for like Napoleon his central problem was that he was surrounded by enemies. The Napoleonic solution was to use speed, energy, surprise, and extreme concentration of his forces at the attack point, in order to knock off his foes one at a time. This was what Hitler tried to do in the Russian attack known as Operation Barbarossa.

Translator's note: Von Roon's argument about the key role of the Ploëști oil fields may not hold much water. Most German military historians do condemn Barbarossa as the fatal opening of a two-front war. They now concede that the Russian buildup was defensive; that Hitler always regarded the attack on Russia to gain "Lebensraum" as his chief policy. It was natural for him to start planning it in July 1940, when his huge land armies were at maximum strength, with no other place to go.

—V.H.

THE PLAYERS in our drama were now scattered around the earth. Easternmost, on June 22, 1941, the day the Germans invaded Russia, was Leslie Slote. Sunlight touched the red Kremlin towers, visible from the windows of his flat in Moscow, and fell on a letter, from Natalie Henry in Rome, lying on his desk by the window.

Natalie had written that Aaron had received his passport! Ignorant of Byron's action at the White House, she had thanked Slote in effervescent pages. She and Aaron were to leave Rome on a Finnish freighter early in July. In his answer, which lay unfinished beside her letter, Slote took modest credit for the success of his efforts in Italy, and then explained why he thought the rumor of an impending invasion of Russia was false. Trying to find gracious words about Natalie's pregnancy, he had given up and gone to bed. By the time he awoke, his letter was out of date.

Six hundred miles to the west, at three fifteen a.m., German cannon had begun to flash and roar along a line a thousand miles long, from the icy Baltic to the warm Black Sea. At the same moment, fleets of German planes started bombing Soviet airfields, smashing up aircraft on the ground by the hundreds. The morning stars still twinkled over the roads, the rail lines, and the fragrant fields when the armored columns and infantry divisions came rolling eastward on the flat Polish plains that stretched toward Kiev, Moscow, and Leningrad.

In Moscow, shortly after sunrise, Foreign Minister Molotov asked a sad and shaken German ambassador, "Did we deserve this?" The ambassador said that since Russia was obviously about to attack Germany, the leader had wisely decided to strike first. Molotov's face, we are told, showed a rare emotion—surprise.

Stalin, too, was surprised at the invasion. The Red Army and the entire nation were surprised. The attack was an unprecedented tactical success. Three and a half million armed men surprised four and a half million armed men. The Pearl Harbor surprise attack some six months later included, by contrast, only some thousands of combatants on each side.

Knowing nothing of all this, Leslie Slote went off to the embassy

with a light heart, hoping to dispose of some overdue work on a quiet Sunday. He found the building in a most unsabbathlike turmoil; and there he learned, with a qualm in his gut, that once again the Germans were coming.

As THE sun rose in Minsk, not so far from the Polish border, its rays fell on a clean-shaven workingman, his suit dusted with flour. Had Natalie seen him, she would not have recognized Berel Jastrow. Shorn of a beard, the Slavic face might have belonged to a Pole, a Hungarian, or a Russian, and he knew the three languages well enough to pass as any of these. Berel was walking fast. At the bakery, on a shortwave radio hidden behind flour sacks, he had heard Dr. Goebbels announce the attack, and just after leaving work he had heard the distant thump of bombs.

Natalie had met Berel as a prosperous merchant, the happy father of a bridegroom. But in the last war he had served on the eastern front in the Austrian army. To avoid eating forbidden foods, he had learned to bake and to cook. Captured by the Russians, he had escaped and made his way back to Austria. He knew army life, he could survive in a forest, and he knew how to get along with Russians. Now, as he walked through dirt streets to a one-story wooden house, he was concerned but not frightened.

"You've finished work early," said his daughter-in-law, stirring a pot while holding a crying baby on one arm.

In a corner of the tiny hot room, her husband murmured over a battered Talmud volume. His beard too was gone, and his hair cut short. Berel's wife and daughter had died in the winter of 1939 of the typhus that had swept bombed-out Warsaw. At that time the Germans had not yet walled up the Jews; and using much of his stored money for bribes, Berel Jastrow had bought himself, his son, and his daughter-in-law out of the city, and had joined the trickle of refugees heading east to the Soviet Union. The Russians were taking in these people, though most had to go to lonely camps beyond the Urals. At Minsk, where Berel had relatives, most of the city's bakers were off in the army, so the bureau for aliens had let him stay.

"I'm home early because the Germans are coming." Accepting

a cup of tea from the daughter-in-law, Berel smiled sadly at her stricken face. "Didn't you hear the bombs?"

"Bombs?" His son looked up in fright. "We heard nothing."

"I suppose the Germans were bombing the railroad," Berel said. "The front is very far away."

The son stood. "Let's leave now, and go east."

"Once we do, we may not be able to stop till we're in Siberia."

"Then let it be Siberia."

"*Siberia!* God Almighty, Mendel, I don't want to go to Siberia," said the wife, patting the peevish baby.

"We kept out of the Germans' way before, and we were all right, weren't we?" the father said calmly. "Let's wait a week. Maybe the Red Army will give them a good slap in the face."

CLEVER though he was, Berel Jastrow was making a serious mistake. The advancing German soldiers were nearer Minsk than any other Soviet city. Behind them traveled small squads called special action units, and they were something unparalleled in the experience of the human race. For these units had no military purpose. Their orders were to kill Russia's Jews, without regard to age or sex. These orders were unwritten; they came down from Hitler through Göring and Heydrich to the "Security Service," Germany's federal police, which organized the units.

There were four special action units, following close on the three giant prongs of the German assault. Army Group South was striking into the Ukraine and along the Black Sea into the Crimea; behind it came two special action units, for here the Jewish settlement was dense. Army Group Center was pointing like an arrow at Moscow by way of Minsk and Smolensk, while Army Group North drove up along the Baltic toward Leningrad.

All told, there were about three thousand of these traveling executioners, setting out to kill between three and four million people. They would recruit native anti-Semites and German soldiers to help them complete the gruesome job.

Strangely, the European Jews already in German hands were not yet being killed en masse. Nor was a program even under way to kill them. True, they were living a hideous life and yielding the last

scraps of their property to the squeeze of German law. But they were living. So, as it happened, Berel and his family would have been somewhat better off not to have left Warsaw.

THE LINE between night and day glided across the Atlantic Ocean, passing alike over British convoys and German submarines, until it reached the New World.

Soon the windows of the CBS building flamed with morning sun. Inside, the corridors were bustling, despite the early hour. The minute the news broke, Hugh Cleveland had sent Madeline over to the Russian embassy to get somebody for the *Who's in Town* show; today, even their scrubwoman would be news. Now Madeline scampered into his office, shiny-eyed.

"I got the ambassador, Hugh. He's here in New York, and he's coming over at ten to nine. The consul's bringing him."

"How'd you ever do that? Why isn't he in Washington?"

"I asked to see the consul and told this girl at the desk I was from the *Who's in Town* program. Next thing I knew I was in a big office with Ambassador Oumansky, and he said he'd come!"

"Fantastic! Terrific! Marry me!" He jumped up, pulled the small girl into his arms, and gave her a kiss.

Madeline broke free, blushing darkly.

The ambassador arrived promptly. Cleveland had never met a Russian Communist, and he was amazed at Oumansky's excellent clothes, natural bearing, and smooth English. The consul was even smoother. The two Russians settled at the microphones.

"Mr. Ambassador, it is a privilege to welcome you at this historic moment—" Cleveland got no further.

"Thank you very much. Since our two countries are now in a common struggle," Oumansky said, "I welcome the opportunity to present to the American people excerpts from the broadcast of Foreign Minister Molotov."

The consul handed Oumansky a typewritten document, to the horror of Cleveland, whose iron rule it was to cut off prepared statements.

"Well, Mr. Ambassador, if I may simply say—"

"Thank you." Oumansky began to read: "Without any claim

having been presented to the Soviet Union, without a declaration of war, German troops attacked our country, and bombed our cities." Cleveland held up a hand, but the ambassador rolled right on: "This unheard-of attack on our country is perfidy unparalleled . . . perpetrated despite a treaty of nonaggression between the U.S.S.R. and Germany, which the Soviet government has most faithfully abided by—"

"Mr. Ambassador, about that treaty, if I may—"

"Excuse me, I shall continue," Oumansky said with unruffled charm, and he went on reading: "The Soviet government has ordered our troops to drive the German troops from . . . our country. . . . The enemy shall be defeated. Victory will be ours."

"To these eloquent words," said Oumansky, "I have little to add. I must return to my many official duties, and I thank you for this opportunity." He smiled and moved as though to rise.

Desperately Cleveland struck in, "Mr. Ambassador, I know how pressed you are in this tragic hour. Just tell me this. How will the American Communists react? They've been violently advocating neutrality. Are they going to make a fast about-face now?"

Oumansky sat back placidly. "Most certainly not. As you know, the working class all over the world has nothing to gain from war, and everything to lose. The war began as a struggle between imperialistic powers, so the workers opposed the war. But the Soviet Union has no empire and no colonies. It is simply a country of peasants and workers who want peace. The American people too are a peace-loving people. The Soviet people will count on their support. Good morning, and thank you very much."

No sun was visible in Chicago; a storm blanketed the city. Palmer Kirby was riding in a taxicab to a secret meeting of the President's Uranium Committee. The committee's purpose was to find out whether enough of the rare uranium isotope 235 could be produced within the next few years to make atomic bombs. Dr. Lawrence's letter had asked Kirby for a feasibility report on manufacturing certain giant electromagnets. Lawrence was an old friend; over the years Kirby had supplied the Nobel Prize winner with specially built equipment for his cyclotron work.

Kirby knew what the giant electromagnets were for; they were part of a process for separating U-235. His opinion on producing uranium for military purposes was definite. Not only could it be done; he thought the Germans were well along toward doing it. Kirby saw the entire war as a race between Germans and Americans to make uranium 235 explode. Hitler's plunge into Russia struck him as a madman's mistake—unless Hitler had uranium bombs, or could count on having them within a year or two. When he heard the news, he decided that the Germans must have succeeded in creating a controlled chain reaction of uranium fission.

The Uranium Committee sat in a drab room, warm and smoky. Kirby knew all the scientists around the table. There were also two military visitors, an army colonel and a navy captain. The committee's chairman was Lyman Briggs, director of the National Bureau of Standards, and this depressed Kirby. Briggs was a pleasant gray-haired man to whom a thousand dollars was a spectacular federal expenditure. Kirby estimated that the Germans might already have spent, in this one effort, something like a billion dollars.

Dr. Lawrence gave Kirby a friendly wave and introduced him to the military men sitting beside him, Colonel Thomas and Captain Kelleher.

The committee listened while Kirby read his paper. When he named a feasible date for delivering the first magnets and the prices he would charge, they started glancing at each other. He finished with a warning about supplies requiring high priorities, and sat down. Lawrence was beaming at him through his glasses.

"Well, that's encouraging," Lyman Briggs said mildly, fingering his tie. "Of course, the price figures are pure fantasy."

The navy captain put in, "General Electric and Westinghouse project twice as much time, more than twice as much money, and they're less sure it's feasible."

"Why should we take your word on feasibility against theirs, Kirby?" Colonel Thomas said.

Kirby said, "Colonel, G.E. and Westinghouse make everything that uses an electric current. They don't have to know this area as I do. I specialize in electromagnets, and for custom-designed equipment I can outperform them. The Germans were way ahead

of us at one point. I went to Germany. I studied their components and imported their nickel-alloy cores."

"Are the Germans ahead of us on these bombs?" Kelleher asked.

"Well, their present self-confidence isn't encouraging."

"I agree. Then why don't we get cracking?" Kelleher sat up, glowering. "Let's go straight to the President and howl for money and action. I assure you the navy will back the committee."

Briggs said, "The President has more immediate things, Captain, requiring money and action. This is all pure theory." He turned to Kirby with an agreeable smile. "I don't think we need detain you. Your report has been very useful. Many thanks."

"Will you need me again, or do I go back to Denver?"

"Don't rush off, Palmer," Lawrence said.

"Right. I'll be at the Stevens."

Kirby passed the rest of the morning in his hotel, listening to the radio and growing gloomier and gloomier. Finally Lawrence called. "Palmer, you shone this morning. I thought we might manage lunch, but the committee's working straight on through. Meantime something has come up. We need one knowledgeable man in constant liaison with business and industry, and we need him right away." He paused. "We've been talking about you."

"Me? No thanks."

"Palmer, no job in the world is more important."

"But ye gods, who would I work for? And report to? Not the National Bureau of Standards!"

"For secrecy, you could get a consultant post in the navy. Kelleher's full of fire to get along. Well, will you serve?"

"Where would I be posted?"

"Washington." Kirby was silent so long that Lawrence added, "Something wrong with Washington?"

"If you want those electromagnets built—"

"That's a year away. This must be done now."

Kirby had given up a scientific career and gone into industry largely because he had felt outclassed by Lawrence and a few other men much younger than himself and more brilliant. To be urged now by this man to take on a task of this importance was irresistible. He said, "If I'm offered the job, I'll accept."

BY THE TIME THE SUN ROSE over San Francisco, the invasion of Russia was half a day old. In the officers' club at the Mare Island Navy Yard, several young submarine skippers were discussing it over breakfast. All agreed that the Soviet Union would be crushed in a matter of weeks—a view held in the U.S. armed forces right to the top. The Red Army's wretched showing against Finland had confirmed the judgment that communism, and Stalin's bloody purges, had reduced Russia to a nation of no military account.

The submariners discussed whether or not the Japanese would now strike; and if so, where. They inclined to agree that so long as the President kept up his suicidal policy of letting them buy more and more oil and scrap iron, the Japs would hold off. But this view was challenged by Branch Hoban of the *Devilfish*.

No skipper in the squadron had more prestige. Hoban's high standing in his class, his chilling air of competence, his magazine-cover good looks, were more than a glamorous façade; they were backed by performance. He was clearly headed for flag rank. When Lieutenant Commander Hoban talked, others listened.

Hoban argued that with the Russians otherwise occupied, the Japs now had a clear field to run the ball from China south to Singapore, Java, anywhere, cleaning up all the rich European possessions before the United States could interfere—if only they moved fast enough. He broke off and left the table when he saw his new executive officer, Lieutenant Aster, motioning to him from the doorway. Aster and Byron Henry had recently been transferred from the S-45 to the larger submarine, *Devilfish*.

Lieutenant Aster handed Hoban a dispatch from Commander, Submarines Pacific: DEVILFISH OVERHAUL CANCELED EXCEPTION REPAIRS VITAL OPERATIONAL READINESS X REPORT EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE UNDER WAY MANILA.

"Well, well, back to base!" Hoban grinned with a trace of high-strung eagerness. "Very well! So ComSubPac expects the kick-off too. Let's see, today's the twenty-second, eh? There's that compressor and number four torpedo tube that have to be buttoned up. That's okay." Holding the dispatch against the wall, he penciled in neat print, "Under way twenty-fourth 0700," and handed it to Aster. "Send that off operational priority."

EARLY SUNLIGHT slanted into the hangar deck of the *Enterprise* in Pearl Harbor onto disemboweled airplanes, half-assembled torpedoes, and all the vast clutter of the floating machine shop that this deck was in peacetime. Sailors in greasy dungarees and officers in khakis were at work everywhere. A voice on the loud-speaker rose above the noise: "Now hear this. Meeting of all officers in the wardroom in ten minutes."

When Warren Henry arrived, the wardroom was already filled. The captain stood up as soon as he saw Warren. "Gentlemen, I guess you've all heard the news. The question is, how does it affect the mission of the *Enterprise*? Now, Lieutenant Henry of Scouter Squadron Six is something of a red-hot on military history. I've asked him to give us a short fill-in here, before we get on with the day's work, so that—attention on deck!"

Rear Admiral Colton, who was ComAirPac's chief of staff, appeared through a doorway. All the officers stood up while the captain conducted him to a leather armchair. Lighting an enormous black cigar, the admiral motioned everyone to take a seat.

After a deprecatory joke about his ignorance, Warren went straight at the topic. "Now, naturally, our concern is the Japanese." Hooking a chart of the Pacific over the movie screen back of him, Warren pointed to the French, Dutch, and British possessions in Southeast Asia. "Oil, rubber, tin, rice—you name what Japan needs to be a leading world power, and there it sits. With what's happened to European armed forces since 1939, it's almost up for grabs. Ten thousand miles or more from San Francisco, and at some points only eight hundred miles from Tokyo.

"Well, our government's been trying to keep the Japs quiet by selling them all the steel, scrap iron, and oil they want, though of course the stuff goes straight into the stockpile they need to fight a war against us. Now, I have no opinion of that policy—"

"I sure have," came a growl from the admiral. The officers laughed and applauded. Colton went on. "Sooner or later they'll come steaming east shooting pieces of old Buicks at us. Go ahead, Lieutenant. Sorry."

"Okay, a little ancient history now." Warren removed the chart and flashed on the screen a situation map of the Russo-Japanese

War. In 1904, without a declaration of war, the Japs made a sneak attack on the Czar's navy at Port Arthur, in the Yellow Sea back of Korea. Then they landed and besieged this key ice-free port. The next year, when Port Arthur finally fell, the Czar accepted a negotiated peace with a country one-sixtieth the size of his own! One hell of a feat for the Japs.

"Incidentally, at the Naval War College, war games often start with a sneak attack by the Japs on Pearl Harbor. A similar trick paid off once, so why not repeat it? Of course 1941 isn't 1904. We've got search planes and radar. They could get themselves royally clobbered. Still, you can't rule that possibility out.

"Always remember their objective. In 1904, they had no intention of marching to Moscow. They wanted to grab off territory in their own backyard. They did, and they still hold it. If they try it again, they'll strike south for the big grab, and then they'll dare us to come on, across a supply line ten thousand miles long, through their triple chain of fortified islands—the Gilberts, the Marshalls, and the Marianas. It won't exactly be a pushover for us."

Warren looked around at the somber faces and went on. "Peace in the Pacific once rested on a rickety three-legged stool. One leg was American naval power; the second, the European forces in Southeast Asia; the third, the Russian land power in Siberia. Well, the Germans knocked out the European leg in 1940. Yesterday they knocked out the Russian leg. So if you want to answer the captain's question—how does Hitler's move affect us—I think the map gives it to you loud and clear. Der Führer has sounded general quarters for the *Enterprise*."

Rear Admiral Colton was first on his feet to lead the applause.

33

PURPLE lightning cracked down the black sky, forking behind the Washington Monument in jagged streams. July on the Potomac was going out, as usual, in choking heat and wild thunderstorms.

Leaving the Navy Building, Victor Henry dived through the rain to a taxicab that drew up. A tall man was getting out. "All yours," he said. "Why, hello, Pug."

"Well, hi! How long have you been in Washington, Kirby?"

"About a month."

"Come home with me for a drink," said Pug. "Better yet, join me for dinner. I'm all alone this evening."

Kirby hesitated. "Where's Rhoda?"

"In New York. She saw off our daughter-in-law and grandson on a plane to Hawaii. Now she's shopping for furniture. We bought a house on Foxhall Road. I'd like to show it to you," he said. "Got much to do in here? I'll wait."

"As a matter of fact," Kirby said, "I only have to pick up some papers. I'll be out in a minute."

The house stood on a little knoll, topping a smooth lawn and a ravine of wild woods. The rain had stopped and a fresh breeze cooled the back porch, where Pug and Kirby drank their martinis. "It's a nice spot," Kirby said.

"Rhoda likes it."

They drank in silence. "You know, Pug," Kirby said, "I'm starting to suspect that the human race, as we know it, may not make it through the industrial revolution."

"I've had a bad day myself," Pug said. "But I'm feeling better by the minute. You will stay for dinner? It just means putting on a couple more chops. Let me tell the cook."

"All right, Pug. Thanks. I've done a lot of eating alone lately."

Victor Henry refilled their glasses and took the jug with him. He brought it back full and tinkling. "I put off dinner. Give us a chance to relax. Tell me, what's happening with uranium?"

Kirby's smile turned wary. "Is that why you're plying me with martinis?"

"If martinis can loosen you up about uranium, let it happen first with an officer in War Plans, and thereafter don't drink martinis."

"Doesn't War Plans have any information?"

"No. It's still Jules Verne talk to us."

"Unfortunately, it's more than that." The rain was starting again. Pug fastened a canvas flap on the windward side of the porch as Kirby went on. "The bomb can be built. With an all-out effort, it might take as little as two years. But we're not making an all-out effort. Tremendous brains are at work on the theory end, but

there's no money available and no plan. Some of us fear that the Germans have cracked stage one, which is to get enough of the isotope to start a controlled chain reaction."

"How powerful an explosive are we talking about?"

"In theory, one bomb might level New York City. Or even an area like Rhode Island. I frankly don't know enough to be sure."

"Helloooo!" Rhoda's voice rang through the house, and heels clicked on the floor. "Surprise! Anybody home? I'm DRENCHED."

"Hi!" Pug called. "We've got company."

"Hello, Rhoda," said Kirby, standing.

"Oh my CAWD!" She froze in the doorway. Her hat dripped, wet strands of hair hung down, and her dress clung to her body.

Pug said, "You finished up fast in New York, didn't you? Palmer and I ran into each other and—" But Rhoda had vanished.

"Dad, what a place! It's a mansion!" Madeline walked through the doorway, as wet as her mother, shaking rain from her hair.

"Well, Matty! You too?"

"Look at me! Christ, did we catch it! No cabs in sight, and—hello, Dr. Kirby."

"You'll both get the flu," Pug Henry said.

"If somebody gave me a martini," said Madeline, eyeing the jug, "I might fight it off." She explained, as her father poured the drink, that she and Cleveland had business at the War Department next morning and Rhoda had decided to come down with them.

"Where's your luggage?" Pug said. "Go put on dry clothes."

"I dropped my stuff at the Willard, Dad."

"What? Why? Here's a whole big house."

"Yes. I came to look at it. Then I'll go to the hotel and change."

"Why the devil are you staying at the hotel?"

"Oh, it's simpler." She glanced at her watch. "Christ, almost seven o'clock. We're having dinner with a big army wheel, Dad, to try to sell him on a new program idea. Hugh visits a different military installation every week. We put on amateurs from the service, a pitch each time about preparedness. I suggested the idea, even the name. *The Happy Hour*. The network is wild about it. If this goes through, Hugh's going to form a corporation and give me some stock. How about that? You look kind of sour, Dad."

"I'll show you around the house before you go," Pug said abruptly. "Will you join the tour, Kirby?"

"I guess I'll leave," said Kirby. "I don't want to intrude."

"You sit right down," Victor Henry said, pushing him into a wicker armchair. "Have one more shortie, and I'll be joining you."

"I've had plenty," Kirby said, accepting one.

Madeline went from room to room with her father, exclaiming with pleasure at what she saw. "Oh, Christ, what a stunning fireplace. . . . Christ, look at the size of these closets!"

"What is this 'Christ' business?" Pug said at last. "You sound like a deckhand."

Madeline said, "Sorry, I caught it from Hugh."

When they reached the entrance hall, Pug said, "This fellow Cleveland. Is he okay?"

Her mouth broadened in a womanly smile. "Daddy, if there were any hanky-panky going on, I'd be a lot sneakier, wouldn't I? Honestly. Give me some credit."

"Well, I'll call a cab for you," Pug muttered, but as he reached for the telephone it rang. "Hello? Yes, Admiral." His face settled into tough, alert lines. "Aye aye, sir. Yes, will do." He hung up, then called for the taxi. Madeline knew better than to ask questions. They joined Kirby on the porch, and almost at once Rhoda appeared, all combed, curled, and made up as for a dance.

"Well! Quick-change artistry," Pug said.

"I hope so. I looked like the witch in *Snow White*."

"Rhoda, I just got a call from Admiral King. I'll ride downtown with Madeline. You give Palmer his dinner and maybe I'll get back in time for coffee."

The taxi honked outside. Kirby again offered to leave, but Pug wouldn't hear of it. He liked the scientist and no more suspected him with Rhoda than he suspected her of cannibalism.

When the outside door closed, Kirby sat forward. "Pug doesn't know he's put you in a spot. I'll be going."

Rhoda sat composed, head atilt. "You'll waste some good double lamb chops. Dinner's about ready."

"I really believe you don't feel awkward at all."

"I'm very glad to see you. What brings you to Washington?"

"A defense job, about which I can tell you nothing."

"You mean you're living here?" Rhoda asked.

"I have an apartment in the Wardman Park."

"Well, well. What about your factory?"

"I fly to Denver every two weeks or so." With a one-sided grin he added, "It's disturbing how well things go on without me."

"And how is that house of yours?"

"Fine. I didn't sell it, and now I won't."

"Oh? And now, here you are. Funny."

"'Funny' isn't the word I would choose."

"Was my letter so very upsetting?" she said softly.

"It was the worst blow I've had since my wife died."

Rhoda blinked at his rough tone. "I'm sorry." She sat clasping and unclasping her fingers in her lap. "I'm trying to think how to tell this. I sat next to the President at that White House dinner. He said wonderful things about Pug, about his future career. A divorced man is very handicapped in the service, especially when he's in sight of flag rank. And—well, so I did what I did."

The maid appeared. "Dinner, Mrs. Henry," she said.

By the time Rhoda and Kirby had finished off the chops and salad and a bottle of wine, the tension was gone and they were laughing at her stories of troubles with the new house. "What about another glass of St. Julien with the cheese, Palmer?" she asked.

"Rhoda, if Pug comes home and finds us cracking a second bottle, those eyebrows will go way up, so."

"Oh, pshaw. Many's the second bottle he and I have cracked." She paused. "I can't tell you how good I feel. This couldn't possibly have been planned. But there's a great weight off my mind."

They had coffee, and the wine, on the porch. A few stars showed in the clearing sky. "This is like a Berlin summer evening," Kirby said. "The light that lingers on, the smell of rained-on trees—"

She said, "You remember?"

"I have an excellent memory. A little too good." He gulped his wine with an abrupt motion. "Now let me ask you something, Rhoda. You told me—and I believed you, and still do—that until I came along there had been no one else. But how come?" After a marked silence he said, "Now I've made you angry."

"No." Rhoda's voice was calm. "Of course I know the answer you want—that I'd never met anyone remotely like you. That's true enough. Still, I've had plenty of chances, dear. To be honest, the men have all been naval officers like Pug, and not one has measured up to him, or even come close." She hesitated. "Don't take this wrong, but Pug does shut me out so much! And from the moment the war started, that got much worse. He's a fanatic, you know, about getting things done."

"That's an American trait," said Kirby. "I'm the same."

"Ah, but in Berlin, knowingly or not, you were courting me. When Pug courted me, I fell in love with him, too. No, there's been no one else. Nor will there be. I'm a quiet grandma now."

They did not speak for a long time. Kirby rose from the wicker chair, looming tall. "I'll go now. I feel remarkably better." He bowed over her hand and kissed it. She put her other hand over his and gave it a soft lingering pressure.

34

A WEEK later, Victor Henry lay asleep in an officer's cabin in the heavy cruiser *Tuscaloosa*. A whisper, "Captain Henry?" brought him awake. He switched on his dim bunk light and saw a sailor offering a dispatch board: DESIRE CAPTAIN VICTOR HENRY TRANSFER WITH ALL GEAR TO AUGUSTA PRIOR TO 0500 TODAY X KING.

"What time is it?" Pug muttered.

"It's 0430. The captain's gig is standing by for you, sir."

A brisk wind was scattering the fog in Nantucket Bay, and the choppy water tossed the gig so that Pug had to brace himself on the seat. The *Augusta* loomed through the mist, a long dark shape not even showing anchor lights, a serious and strange peacetime violation. Captain Henry mounted the cruiser's ladder; peculiar long ramps on the decks and freshly welded handrails were obviously special fittings for the crippled President of the United States.

Admiral King, in starched whites, sat in his high bridge chair querying the cruiser's captain about arrangements for Roosevelt. King dismissed him and turned cold eyes on Pug.

"Henry, the President will want a word with you when he comes

aboard. Last week, when he asked to have you along on this exercise, he didn't mention that he wanted you at his beck and call. I just learned that; hence this transfer from the *Tuscaloosa*. I trust you're prepared with any information he may desire."

"I have my work papers here, Admiral."

Virtually nobody saw the crippled man hoisted aboard. The presidential yacht *Potomac* came along the port side, out of sight of Martha's Vineyard. Sharp commands rang out, the *Potomac* churned away, and the grinning, waving President appeared on the forecandle in his wheelchair, pushed by a navy captain, with an impressive following of civilians, admirals, and generals. The white suit and floppy white hat, the high-spirited gestures, the cigarette holder cocked upward in the massive bespectacled face were almost too Rooseveltian to be real.

The two cruisers weighed anchor and steamed out to sea, a screen of destroyers ahead of them, proceeding northeast in gray North Atlantic weather. Pug walked the main deck for hours, relishing the sea wind, the tall black waves, and the slow roll of the ship. But no summons came from the President. Pug's chief in War Plans was aboard the *Tuscaloosa*; they had planned to do a lot of work en route. Now, when the two cruisers reached the rendezvous, they would need an all-night conference.

He was finishing breakfast next morning when the note came: "If you're not standing watch, look in about ten or so. The Skipper."

At the stroke of ten Pug went to flag quarters. A rugged, frozen-eyed marine came to attention outside the President's suite.

"Hello, Pug! Just in time to hear the news!" Roosevelt sat at a table, listening to a radio. He shook his head sadly at a Moscow admission that the Germans had driven far past Smolensk. Then he perked up. President Roosevelt's whereabouts were no longer a secret, the announcer said. Reporters had seen him on the deck of the *Potomac* at eight o'clock last evening, passing through the Cape Cod Canal. "Ha-ha!" he said. "And here I was on the high seas. How d'you suppose I worked that one, Pug?"

"Somebody in disguise on the yacht, sir?"

"Darn right! Tom Wilson, the engineer. We got him a white suit and white hat. It worked! We didn't want U-boats out gunning for

Churchill and me." Roosevelt was searching through papers. "Ah. Look this over, old fellow." It was a typewritten document headed "For the President—Top Secret, Two Copies Only."

The radio announcer was saying that the German propaganda ministry had ridiculed stories of Jews being massacred in German-held parts of the Soviet Union. The President switched off the radio in disgust. "The Nazis are outrageous liars. I hope those stories are terribly exaggerated. Our intelligence says they are. Still—" He took off his pince-nez and rubbed his eyes. "Pug, did your daughter-in-law ever get home with her uncle?"

"I understand they're on their way, sir."

"Good. Quite a lad, that submariner of yours."

"A presumptuous pup, I'm afraid." Victor Henry was trying all this time to read the document, which was explosive.

"I also have a son—Franklin—who's an ensign, Pug. He's aboard, and I want you to meet him." Roosevelt was clearing a space on the table, and he now took up two decks of cards. He moved cards around in silence for a while; then, as he observed Pug turning over the last page, said, "Well? What do you think?"

"This is something for my chief, Mr. President."

"Yes, but he's on the *Tuscaloosa*. And another squabble between service heads is what I *don't* want." The President smiled with flattering warmth. "Pug, you have a feeling for facts, and when you talk I understand you, two uncommon virtues. So let's have it."

Pug took a while to reply. The document was a scorcher. If it leaked to isolationist senators, it might well end Lend-Lease, kill Selective Service, and even start an impeachment drive.

The half dozen government agencies responsible for Lend-Lease and war production had tangled themselves and the big industries into paralysis. While their heads jockeyed for presidential favor, shortages and bottlenecks kept munitions production at a feeble trickle. To break this up, Roosevelt had called for a "Victory Program," ordering the armed forces to list everything they needed to win a global war and to work out new priorities.

For weeks, planners like Victor Henry had been calculating possible American invasions of Axis-held territories. The army and the navy had each prepared a draft, and each had of course called

for the greatest possible share of manpower and industrial output. Now the army was taking its case to the President in a sharp critique of the navy's demands.

"Essentially, Mr. President," Pug said, "the navy and the army are just using different crystal balls. The army figures it may have to fight the Axis single-handed after Russia and England fold. So they demand the biggest force our country can field. Fair enough. The main difference is on Lend-Lease. The army says we want to give away too many arms, which the Germans may capture and use against us. Our contention is that every German who dies at Russian and British hands is one less Boche to shoot at us."

"But Lend-Lease isn't the only issue. I notice the navy wants a hefty share of our total steel production," the President said.

"Sir, assault from the sea is the toughest battle problem. It's what kept Hitler from beating England last year. The answer is special landing craft that can hit an open beach in large numbers. You throw a force ashore, and keep it supplied and reinforced until it captures a harbor for your regular transports. But you need swarms of landing craft. We figure about a hundred thousand."

"*A hundred thousand!*" the President said. "Why, all the shipyards in the United States couldn't do that in ten years."

But when Pug took a sheaf of designs from his briefcase, the President scanned them with zest. There were drawings of every sort of craft, from a big landing ship to cross the ocean with tanks and trucks in its belly, to little amphibious tanks. "There's still the shipyard problem, Pug," Roosevelt said. "You're going to have to use factories wherever you can find them—on rivers and inland waterways." His eyes lit up. "You know? This program could be a godsend to small business. Money going out to hundreds of small factories in many states—" He lit a cigarette. "Very good. Write your notes on that army paper, Pug. Then, once the Victory Program is finished, let's send you out to sea. You're overdue."

Victor Henry saw that the moment was favorable. "Well, Mr. President, I have been yearning to be exec of a battleship."

"Exec? Don't you think you can command one?"

Trying hard to show no emotion, realizing what might hang on the next few words, Pug said, "I think I can, sir."

"Well, let's get you command of a battleship." The regal way the President smiled at Pug as he dismissed him showed his relish for power and his satisfaction in bestowing largesse.

Pug did not see the President again all the way to Newfoundland. He was under no illusion about the place he held in the President's esteem. Roosevelt liked him because he was knowledgeable, got things done, and kept his mouth shut. But Pug counted himself among the small fry, as one of the many obscure men the President used for a variety of missions.

Still, the promise of a battleship command gave him sleepless nights. He tried to crush down his elation. Pug admired the President and at times almost loved him. But he did not understand or trust him. Behind the warm, jolly surface there loomed a grim, ill-defined personality of distant visions and hard purpose. It might be that Roosevelt would remember his promise. It was equally likely that some new job would put the promise off until it faded.

A PRIMEVAL hush lay heavy in the wilderness-ringed Argentinia bay, Newfoundland, where the American ships awaited the arrival of Winston Churchill.

At nine o'clock, three gray destroyers steamed into view ahead of a battleship camouflaged in swirls and splotches of color like snakeskin. This was HMS *Prince of Wales*, bigger than any other ship in sight, bearing the guns that had hit the *Bismarck*. As it steamed past the *Augusta*, a brass band on its decks shattered the hush with "The Star-Spangled Banner." Quiet fell. The band on the quarterdeck of the *Augusta* struck up "God Save the King."

The President stood under an awning rigged at number one gun turret, one hand holding his hat on his heart, the other clutching the arm of his older son, Elliott, an air corps officer. With them were admirals, generals, and eminent civilians like Averell Harri- man and Sumner Welles. Not five hundred yards away, Winston Churchill was plain to see, gesturing with his big cigar.

Churchill came to the *Augusta* at eleven. Among the staff members with him Pug saw Air Commodore Burne-Wilke, and a remembrance of Pamela Tudsbury in her blue WAAF uniform distracted him from the dramatic handshake of Roosevelt and

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Churchill at the gangway. Standing well back in the rank of Admiral King's staff officers, Pug made himself pay attention.

In an odd way the two leaders diminished each other. Who, Pug wondered, was number one man? Roosevelt stood a full head taller, but was pathetically braced on leg frames, holding on to his son's arm. Churchill looked up at him with majestic good humor, much older, more assured. Yet there was a trace of deference about the Prime Minister. By a shade of a shade, Roosevelt looked like number one. It occurred to Pug that the real import of this conference was that it was the changing of the guard.

The staffs conferred all day. Victor Henry worked with the planners, on the level below the chiefs of staff and their deputies where Burne-Wilke operated, and of course far below the summit of the President, the Prime Minister, and their advisers. One cardinal point the planners hammered out fast. Building new ships to replace sinkings by U-boats came first. No war matériel could be used against Hitler until it had crossed the ocean.

Next morning, in bright sunlight, boats from all over the bay came clustering to the *Prince of Wales* for church services. An American destroyer slowly nosed alongside the battleship, and at a point where the decks were level a gangplank was thrown across. Leaning on Elliott's arm and on a cane, Franklin Roosevelt, in a blue suit and gray hat, lurched out on the gangplank, laboriously hitching one leg forward from the hip, then the other. The bay was calm, but both ships were moving on long swells. Victor Henry, like all the Americans crowding the destroyer bridge, hardly breathed as the tall President tottered and swayed.

Here was enough willpower, Pug thought, to win a world war. A ramp could have been laid across and Roosevelt wheeled over in comfort and with dignity. But in his piteous fashion he could walk; and to board the British battleship at Winston Churchill's invitation for church parade, he was walking.

His foot touched the deck. Churchill saluted him and offered his hand. The band burst into "The Star-Spangled Banner." Roosevelt stood at attention, chest heaving, face stiff with strain. Then, escorted by Churchill, he hobbled across the deck and sat.

As the sailors, massed in ranks around the afterdeck, sang "O

God, Our Help in Ages Past" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers," Winston Churchill kept wiping his eyes. The old hymns, roared by the young male voices, brought prickles to Victor Henry's spine. Yet this exalting service made him uneasy, too. Here were men of the two navies, praying as comrades-in-arms. But it was a phony picture. The English were fighting, the Americans were not. The Prime Minister, with this church parade under the long guns, was ingeniously working on the President's feelings. If Roosevelt could come away from this religious experience without promising to declare war on Germany, or at least to give Japan an ultimatum to lay off the British in Asia, he was a hard man indeed.

After the closing prayer, a few British sailors cautiously moved out of ranks. One, then another, sneaked cameras from their blouses. When nobody stopped them, and the two leaders smiled and waved, a rush began. Pug, watching this unwonted disorder on a warship with mixed feelings, felt a touch on his elbow. It was Burne-Wilke. "Hello there, my dear fellow. What is your position on shipboard drinking? I have a fair bottle of sherry."

"I'm for it."

In Burne-Wilke's comfortable cabin they settled down with sherry glasses. "I suppose you know that this ship crossed the ocean without escort," the air commodore said after a while. "Our first night out we ran into a gale. Our destroyers couldn't maintain speed, so we zigzagged on alone most of the way."

"Sir, I was appalled to hear about it. You had your good angels escorting you. That's all I can say."

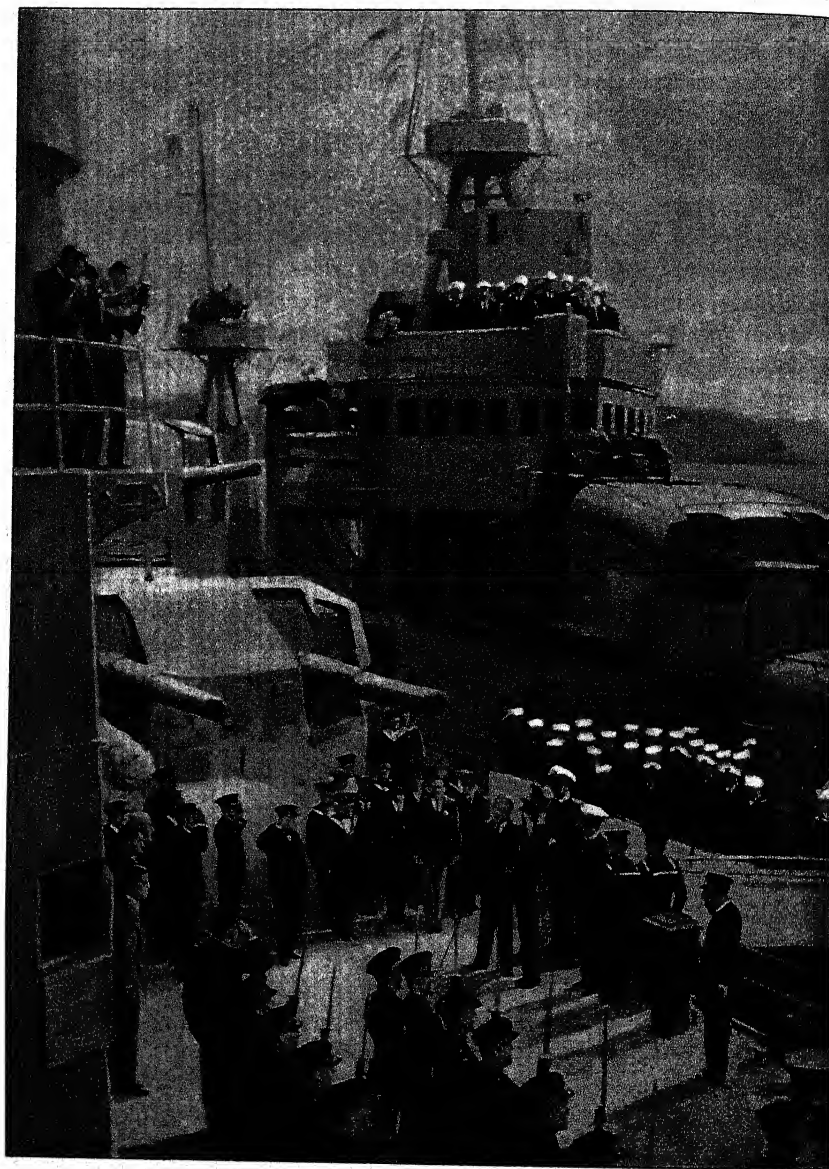
"Oh, well, at any rate here we are. But it might be prudent not to overwork those angels. On our way back, every U-boat in the Atlantic will be on battle alert." Burne-Wilke paused. "We're stretched thin for escorts, you know. We've rounded up another destroyer. Admiral Pound would be happier with two more."

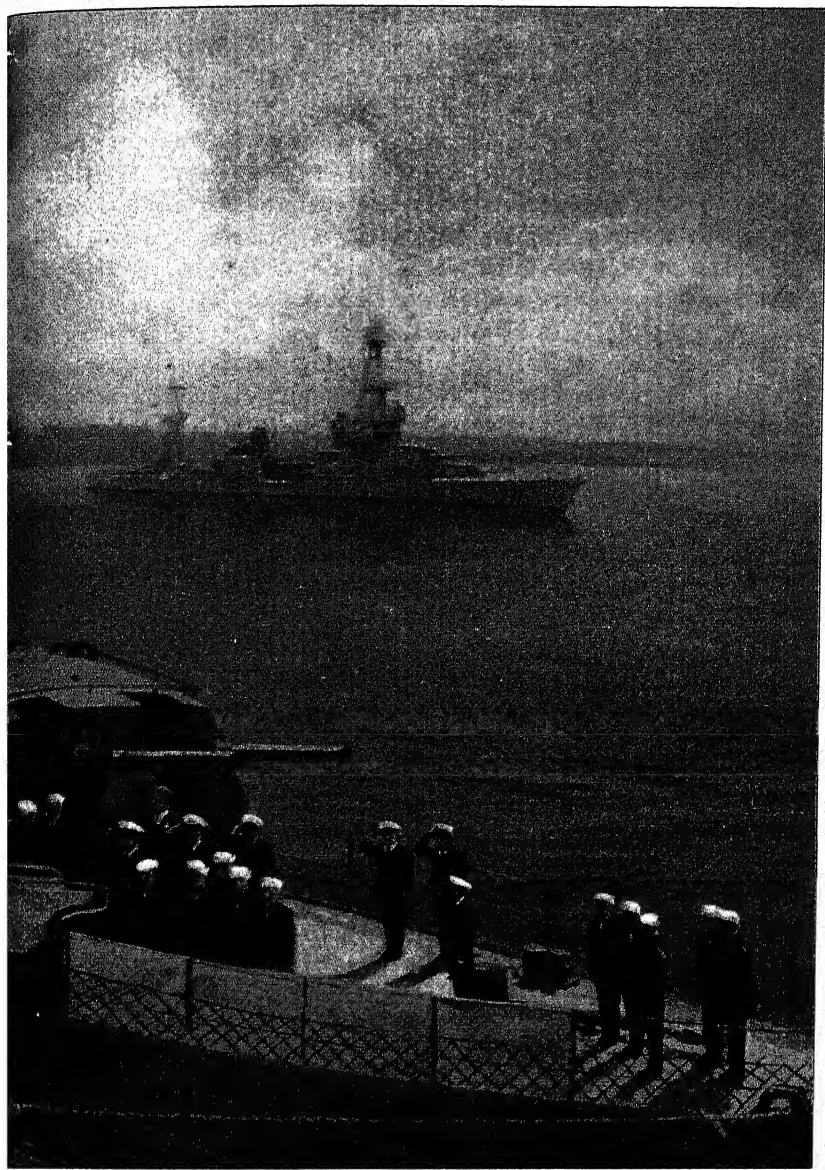
Pug quickly said, "I'll talk to Admiral King."

"You understand it cannot be a request from us. The Prime Minister would be downright annoyed. He's hoping we'll meet the *Tirpitz* and get into a running gunfight."

"Let me start on this now, sir." Pug rose to his feet.

"Oh? Would you?" Burne-Wilke said. "Thanks awfully."





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Pug found Admiral King on the afterdeck. When he recounted his talk with Burne-Wilke, the lines along King's lean jaws deepened. He nodded twice and strolled away without a word.

AMID much wining and dining, the conference went on for two more days. On the last day, Admiral King sent for Pug. "Task Unit 26 point 3 point 1, consisting of two destroyers, the *Mayrant* and the *Rhind*, has been formed," he said without a greeting. "It will escort the *Prince of Wales* to Iceland. You will embark in the *Prince of Wales* as liaison officer, and return with our task unit."

"Aye aye, sir."

"In confidence, we'll soon be convoying all ships to Iceland. Hell, our marines are occupying the place now. The President's even sending a young officer along as a naval aide to Churchill while he tours our Iceland base. Ensign Franklin D. Roosevelt, Junior." King spoke the name with an expressionless face.

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Henry, how are you at languages?"

"It's a long time since I tried a new one, Admiral."

"Well, a military supply mission will go to the Soviet Union in September, headed by Averell Harriman and England's Lord Beaverbrook. If Russia's still in the war, that is. Mr. Hopkins has brought up your name. He appears impressed, and the President too, by your expertise on landing craft and so forth. In your service record, it seems you claim a 'poor to fair' knowledge of Russian."

"Admiral, I put that down when I entered the Academy in 1911. There were some Russian families where I grew up in California, and we had a Russian-speaking club at my high school."

"I see. Well, upon returning from Iceland you will be detached from War Plans to prepare yourself, with an intensive refresher course in Russian, for a possible trip to the Soviet Union. You'll have interpreters. But with even a smattering, your intelligence value will be greater."

"Aye aye, sir."

King stared at Victor Henry and actually favored him with a smile. "Have you heard that extension of the draft passed the House of Representatives an hour ago?"

"It did? Thank God."

"By one vote! Not very encouraging, but there it is. Our job is to keep going anyway. Incidentally, Henry, I'll soon be needing an operations officer on my staff. After your Russian errand, that's an assignment you may get."

Pug kept his face rigid. "It would be an honor, Admiral." Compared with a battleship command, it was a crushing prospect.

"I thought you might like it. I mentioned it to the President, and he said it sounded like the perfect spot for you."

A verse from Psalms knifed into Pug's mind: *Put not your trust in princes.*

TO BRASS-band anthems and booming gun salutes, the *Prince of Wales* left Argentia bay. In the wardroom, Victor Henry sensed the subtle gloom hanging over the ship. What the conference had accomplished to increase help for England remained undisclosed, and this clearly struck the battleship's officers as a bad sign. They could not believe that Churchill had risked the best ship in their strained navy, and his own life, only to return empty-handed. Feeling that his presence embarrassed them, Pug went to bed early.

Next day the wardroom was packed for Clement Attlee's broadcast from London. As the Lord Privy Seal read the "Atlantic Charter"—the British and American joint communiqué following the meetings—the faces of the listeners lengthened. For Pug, the American guest, it was a bad half hour. The high-flown language bespoke not a shred of increased American commitment. Abuse of Nazi tyranny, praise of "four freedoms," dedication to a future of world peace and brotherhood, yes; help for the British, flat zero. Franklin Roosevelt was certainly a tough customer, Pug thought.

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THE Atlantic Charter, like the elephant, resembled a tree, a snake, a wall, or a rope, depending on where the blind took hold of it. Axis propaganda jeered at its gassy rhetoric about freedom, calling it all a big empty bluff. In the United States, a howl went up that Roosevelt had committed the country to go to war on England's

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side. There was also a cheer—though not nearly so loud—for the most glorious document since the Magna Charta.

British newspapers implied that what had really been wrought at Argentia bay had for the moment to be hushed up. And the Russians, while hailing the meeting as a triumph for all peace-loving peoples, also saw the charter as disappointing in that it mentioned no plan for the crucial second front.

No reaction was stronger or blinder than the one that swept the immured Jews in Minsk. The Germans had confiscated most of their radios, but a sixteen-year-old boy had heard the Russian broadcast imperfectly on a tiny receiving set rigged in his attic. He had joyously spread the story that Roosevelt had met Churchill and that the United States was declaring war on Germany! The effect on the ghetto of this untruth was so wonderful, so life-giving, that one may wonder whether falsehood may not sometimes be a necessary anodyne for human souls.

The spirit of the Minsk Jews had recently been shattered. They had resigned themselves, with the coming of the Germans, to being herded into a few square blocks, to being arrested and maltreated. It was a pogrom, but Jewry survived pogroms. Then one night Germans in unfamiliar dark uniforms had swarmed into the ghetto and had cleared out the dwellers along two main streets, loading them into trucks—for "resettlement." According to reports brought back by Russian eyewitnesses, the trucks had driven five miles into the countryside. There in a moonlit ravine the Germans had lined the people up and had shot everyone—including babies and old people—and then had buried them in a ditch.

If this story of wholesale, random murder were true, then the Germans were far worse than the most frightful rumors had ever pictured them. Yet next day Minsk looked much the same, the sunflowers bloomed, the sun shone in a blue sky. The soldiers who cruised the streets as usual looked entirely ordinary and human. Russians still walked everywhere, old neighbors of the Jews. Only now all the houses in two streets stood quiet and empty.

Into this stunned moment came the word that America was entering the war. People cried, laughed, kissed each other, and drank to President Roosevelt. However long it might take America to

win, there would be no more insane occurrences like the emptying of those two streets. The Germans would not dare now!

Though the penalty for possessing a radio was death, Berel Jastrow still kept his set in the bakery. At the underground meeting of Jewish leaders that night he reported the facts about the Argentinia bay conference as he had heard them broadcast from Sweden. But he was a foreigner, and he was telling the committee what it did not want to hear. Somebody observed that he had probably been listening to the German-controlled Norwegian radio.

A few days later Berel and his son, with the wife and baby, disappeared. The ghetto people at first assumed that they had been shot by Wehrmacht forest patrols while trying to flee; but it was the German custom to throw fresh bodies in Jubilee Square as a warning to others. Nobody saw the bodies of the Jastrows, so there was reason to believe they might be alive somewhere.

IN ROME the Germans were conducting themselves very well, at least within the purview of Natalie and her uncle. But Aaron Jastrow at last was eager to go home. He had finished the first draft of his book on Constantine; he found Rome drearier day by day, and the food was bad and getting worse. Even now he was not afraid. He had read so much history that the events of the hour seemed merely a repetition of old games. If the Nazis won, it might not matter so much, providing they did not march into Italy. And why should they invade a groveling satellite?

But Natalie, eight months' pregnant, was getting scared. Owing to Finland's entry into the war, the Finnish freighter had been rerouted. She had to deal with Italian railroads, shipping lines, and airlines. But the worst stumbling block at this stage was something called an exit permit, which the Italian emigration authorities would usually grant when one had transportation tickets to show. Now they were being difficult. The thought of confinement far from home, of feeding a newborn infant the rations of pinched Italy, began to alarm her as nothing had before.

When she heard the first broadcast about the Atlantic Charter meeting, it sounded as if America were about to come into the war, in which case she and her uncle would be interned as enemy aliens.

She at once concocted a reckless scheme. Americans she knew had told her of an excellent obstetrician in Zurich, Dr. Herman Wundt. She decided to request permission from the Swiss authorities for a medical visit; she really had been having intermittent bleeding. Pleading her condition, she would take her uncle along, and so get exit permits from the Italians. Once in Switzerland, they would make it out by hook or crook. For one thing, she knew that Bunky Thurston had been transferred to Zurich from Lisbon.

To her delight, Aaron after some argument agreed. He would leave everything at the hotel except the typed book, which he would carry in one small valise with his clothing. If the Italians did not want Jastrow to leave for good—something Natalie now half suspected—such a casual departure might deceive them.

The dodge worked like a charm. A week later they flew to Zurich. Everything was in order, except that Jastrow did not have formal permission from the Swiss, as she did, to stay for ten days. His document simply stated that he was accompanying an invalid for her safety en route. Natalie telephoned Bunky Thurston from the airport, and he said he'd be right along to meet them; he would take care of Aaron's Swiss permit, he said.

The Zurich terminal was startling with its bustle, its clean glitter, its shops crammed with splendid clothing, jewelry, exquisite pastries, and fresh fruits. When Thurston arrived, Natalie was eating a big yellow pear, uttering little moans of delight.

"What a foul idiocy war is!" she said, as they drove into town. "The Swiss are the only smart Europeans. Do you like Zurich better than Lisbon, Bunky?"

"I don't like to think of eighty million Germans seething just beyond the Alps," Thurston said. "But at least they're nice high Alps. The tragic refugee thing goes on here too, only less visibly."

The Swiss immigration authorities had kept the visitors' passports. "Will they send them on to you?" Aaron asked Thurston.

"Yes, or you can just pick them up when you go back."

"We're not going back, darling," Natalie said.

"What do you mean, you're not going back?"

"We're going to hop the first plane or goat cart for the good old U.S.A. It's the whole point of this trip."

"Natalie, it won't work. Aaron got through immigration on my parole. He has no transit visa."

Jastrow said sadly, "I thought it was going too easily."

"Bunky, I won't have my baby in Rome," Natalie said. "That's that. I know you can solve this."

"Well, give me a little time. There aren't too many ways to travel out of Zurich now. I'll look into it a bit."

He left them outside Dr. Wundt's office and took their suitcases off to the hotel. Jastrow dozed in an anteroom while Wundt examined Natalie. After asking a few questions, the gynecologist, a gnome with big ears and darting brown eyes, probed, took specimens, and submitted Natalie to the usual tests. "You're as strong as a horse, and you're carrying that baby perfectly," he told her, when they were both sitting in his tiny office.

"I had three bleeding episodes."

"Yes. You mentioned that. When was the last one?"

"Let's see. A month ago. Maybe a little more."

"Well, you can wait around a day or so for the results of the tests. I'm sure they'll be negative. Your doctor is the best man in Rome. I know Dr. Carona well."

"Dr. Wundt, I don't want to have the baby in Rome."

"So? Why not?"

"Because if the United States gets into the war, I'll find myself on enemy soil with a newborn baby."

"Mrs. Henry, pregnancy has been much abused here to solve passport difficulties. The authorities won't extend your stay without a written statement from me that you're unable to travel."

"But I'm having no passport difficulties," Natalie said. "Can I safely fly back to the United States? That's all I want to know."

The doctor considered. "You're quite able to fly back to Rome. But the United States—that's bound to be a rough, long journey."

"You mean I might lose the baby?"

"Not necessarily, but an expectant mother with a first baby should avoid such a strain." He peered at his appointment book. "I will see you tomorrow at five, and we will discuss your tests."

At dinner with Thurston and her uncle that night, Natalie was quite blithe. The joy of being out of Fascist Italy overbore Wundt's

discouragement; and she was cheered at being told she was "strong as a horse." The rest would work out, she thought. She decided not to quiz Thurston, but let him talk when he was ready.

Meantime her common ground with him was Leslie Slote. She told droll anecdotes of her wretched Paris flat and of young love on the Left Bank which Aaron Jastrow had never heard. "You're very merry, Natalie," he said.

"I know. The wine, no doubt, and the lights. Switzerland's amazing, Bunky. A little diving bell of freedom in an ocean of horror."

"You can understand why the Swiss have to be very careful," Thurston said. "Otherwise they'd be swamped with refugees."

Natalie and her uncle sobered as the consul went on. "There are more than four million Jews caught in Hitler's Europe. And in all of Switzerland there are only four million people. The Swiss have got sixteen thousand square miles of land, we've got three and a half million. Who should be taking in the Jews? Yet they are doing it, carefully. As an American official, I'm in no position to take a high moral tone about you with the Swiss."

"One can see that," Jastrow said quietly.

"Nothing's been decided, you understand," Thurston said. "A favorable solution is possible. Natalie, could you endure a train trip to Lisbon? It could take as long as six days."

"I don't think I should risk that."

"Well, the only airline operating from Zurich to Lisbon now is Lufthansa. It flies once a week, takes about twenty hours with stops, and is usually crowded with Nazi hotshots. But your passport doesn't say you're Jewish, and even the Germans have some tenderness for pregnant women. You'd have to separate from your uncle, though."

"I wouldn't mind trying Lufthansa myself," said Jastrow. "I truly don't believe that the Germans would molest me."

Thurston shook his head. "Natalie's the wife of a Gentile naval officer. I think she'd be all right. Don't you go on Lufthansa!"

"I have to decide, then," Natalie said, "whether to chance Lufthansa alone or the train with Aaron."

"You don't have to decide anything yet. I'm just telling you some of the things to think about."

THE FOLLOWING EVENING Natalie saw Dr. Wundt, who told her, with a sad shrug, that all her tests were negative.

"That's all right. I may be able to stay, anyway," she said. "My consul's looking into it."

"Ah, so?" The little doctor's face brightened. "Nothing would please me more. Let me book your lying-in right away, Mrs. Henry. The hospitals are crowded."

"I'll let you know in a day or two."

In the morning, a white envelope was slipped under her door: "Hi. Things are cooking. Meet me at the lakefront, both of you, four o'clock, at Zurich Pleasure Boats. Bunky."

So they could talk privately, the consul had hired a small motorboat and was sitting in it, waiting for them. About a mile out from shore he killed the motor, and they could hear a German waltz thumping brassily on a passing excursion steamer.

"We're not in bad shape," Thurston said. "I've been on the telephone and teletype to Rome. Your Byron outdid his Lisbon feat, didn't he? Talking to President Roosevelt about your uncle's passport! What sheer nerve! So your uncle's file carries a big 'presidential' flag on it now, and that's just fine. I've put you on the waiting list at Lufthansa, Natalie. As of now, the next two weekly flights are booked, but you've got a reservation on the third. Immigration will extend your stay. But Lufthansa is sure you'll get out sooner."

"What about Aaron?"

"Well, that's a different story, but you're set, too, Aaron. You're returning to Rome, but the ambassador says that if he has to, he'll appoint you to his staff and send you home on a diplomatic priority. He'll assume responsibility for dealing with the Italians. I promise you there will be no more trouble with your exit permit."

"You do think that's better for me than taking the train to Lisbon?" Jastrow sounded pleased and relieved.

"Great heavens, yes! If you took the train, you'd be leaving Switzerland illegally. Now that you're legal, *stay* legal."

Jastrow turned to his niece. "Well, my dear! This sounds like a parting of the ways."

Natalie did not reply. With a keen glance at her Thurston said, "If you'll reconsider Rome, Natalie, the ambassador will make the

identical arrangements for you that he's working on for your uncle. That's what I'd recommend, myself."

"Well, it all takes some mulling over, doesn't it?" Natalie said. "Can we go back? I'm tired."

"Of course." Thurston at once started the motor.

WHEN Natalie came down to breakfast the next morning, her uncle was sitting at a window table of the restaurant, sipping coffee. "Hello, lazybones," he said. "I've been up for hours."

Natalie ordered coffee and a roll.

Jastrow looked at her, sitting pallid, tense, and glum, with hands folded on her bulky stomach. "Natalie, my dear, I've quite made up my mind about what happens next."

"Have you? That's great. So have I."

He said, "I'm going back to Rome. I would try Lufthansa, dear. Your escape comes first. Why are you staring at me?"

"Because that's what I intended to tell you I would do."

"Is it?" His face lit up in a gentle smile. "Thank heaven. I thought you'd put up a heroic argument for returning with me. No, I trust the ambassador, and anyway there's no sense thrashing against one's fate. I have a place on the afternoon plane to Rome."

Natalie sipped her coffee. Was this a game to cajole from her an offer to go back to Rome? She was wary of her uncle's subtle selfishness. "Well," she said, "are you sure you can manage?"

"If the ambassador himself is intervening, how can I muck it up? But will you take my manuscript? I'll have all the draft notes, so that's two chances of preserving *The Arch of Constantine*."

At last Natalie began to believe her uncle and to warm toward him. "Aaron, this parting is going to feel very strange."

"Natalie, I bear a burden of guilt about you. Someday you'll know the measure of my gratitude." He put his bony little hand on hers. "You've earned yourself—as our fathers quaintly put it—a large share in the world to come."

So AARON Jastrow went back docilely to Rome. His niece heard nothing for ten dreary days, in which the comforts of the Swiss rapidly palled. She was terribly lonely. Bunky Thurston was busy

and had little time for her. The Swiss treated her, as they did all foreigners, with cool paid courtesy. A letter came at last, sprinkled with special-delivery stamps and censors' markings.

Natalie, you and I are *in the clear* with the Italian authorities! I now have in my possession *two* air tickets, *and* properly dated exit permits, *and* Portuguese transit visas, *and* Pan Am connections, *and* highest diplomatic priority stickers! They're lying on the desk before me, and I've never seen a more glorious sight.

The date of the tickets is December 15. It's far off, but Pan Am's the bottleneck. No sense going to Lisbon and sitting there for months! And this transportation is *sure*. Of course it does mean having your baby here. That's up to you. I enclose a note from the ambassador's charming wife. Her invitation may be welcome. . . .

The ambassador's wife had written:

Dear Natalie:

I sent my daughter home three months ago to have her baby. Her room is empty, her husband works in the embassy, and all of us miss her so much! If you can get home, of course, nothing could be better. Otherwise, please consider coming here, where at least you would eat well, and the baby would be born on American "soil," so to speak. We would love to have you.

On this same morning, Bunky Thurston telephoned. Lufthansa had one seat to Lisbon, September 17, four days off. No opening existed on Pan Am out of Lisbon, but they had put her high on the long waiting list. "I'd suggest you go straight to the Lufthansa office on the Bahnhofstrasse, just two blocks down from the hotel, and grab yourself this ticket," he said. "But I know what Leslie Slote would say. Byron too."

"I know. Play it safe, go to Rome. But you're wrong about Byron. Byron would tell me to get on Lufthansa."

"Well, let me know if I can help," Thurston said.

Natalie set out for Lufthansa. All the airline offices were in the same block. Air France, Pan Am, BOAC were closed and shuttered. Lufthansa's eagle, perched on a wreathed swastika, shone bright in the sun. The swastika made Natalie hesitate. Through

the window she saw behind the counter a tanned blond girl in an azure-and-gold uniform, perfectly groomed. A tanned man in a green sports jacket was laughing with her.

They stopped laughing as Natalie entered. "Good afternoon," she said. "The American consul has made a reservation for me to fly to Lisbon on the seventeenth."

"Oh, yes. Are you Mrs. Byron Henry?" the girl said in clear English. "May I have your passport?" Natalie gave it to her, and the girl handed her a long form. "Fill this out, please."

The first page asked about the passenger's travels in the past year. Natalie turned over the form. Among the blanks were spaces for religion of father and mother.

A nerve spasm swept her. It was simple enough to write in "Methodist"; yet after Aaron's troubles, what lists might she not be on? How could she be sure that the Königsberg incident had not been recorded? And what had happened to those Jewish neutrals at Königsberg whom the Germans had marched off? As these thoughts raced in her mind, the baby gave a little jolt inside her.

"Give me my passport, please," she said.

The girl's eyebrows arched. "Is something wrong?"

Natalie blurted, "Americans don't ask people's religion for travel purposes, and don't give their own."

The man and the girl exchanged a knowing look. The man said, "If you want to leave that blank, it is quite all right, Mrs. Henry."

"I'll take my passport, please."

The girl tossed the booklet on the counter and turned her back.

Natalie left. Three doors down, the Swissair office was open. She went in and booked a flight to Rome the following morning.

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A SLIM dark-haired girl walked out on the stage of the open-air theater at the Pearl Harbor naval base. The swish of her ice-cream-pink dress, displaying silk-sheathed legs, brought glad whistles from the soldiers and sailors who filled every seat. Directly up front sat the governor of Hawaii and the admirals and generals and their ladies. It was just before eleven o'clock, some-

what early for staged fun, but this first *Happy Hour* broadcast was being aimed at the big nighttime audience along the Atlantic seaboard. Beyond the low stage, where the navy band sat, several moored battleships were visible, towering in a gray double row.

This debut of a major new radio program at the naval base had been stirring the somnolent territory for days. Headlines about the show in Honolulu papers quite overshadowed the news of the German encirclement of Russian armies around Kiev. The navy had even postponed a fleet drill simulating an enemy surprise attack, because it conflicted with the broadcast time.

At the microphone, the girl stood smiling till the good-humored commotion subsided. "Thank you, and hello. I'm Mr. Cleveland's assistant, Madeline Henry." A lone wolf whistle sliced down from the topmost row. She wagged a finger. "And you watch yourself up there! I have two brothers sitting out here, a naval aviator and a submariner, and they're both big and strong."

Madeline described the rules of the show. Only genuine fighting men could take part. Every participant would receive a five-hundred-dollar defense bond. The one winning the most applause would get an extra prize: the sponsor would fly in his girl or his parents to visit him for a week. "Mr. Cleveland just hopes the winner won't have a girl in Cape Town or Calcutta. And now here he is—the star of the famous *Amateur Hour*—Mr. Hugh Cleveland."

Cheers greeted Cleveland as he came to the microphone. "Maybe I ought to just let Madeline keep going. I've got the job, but she's sure got the lines." He wagged his eyebrows, and the audience laughed. "I'd better introduce her brothers, so you'll see just how big and strong they are. The naval aviator is Lieutenant Warren Henry, of the *Enterprise*. Where are you, Warren?"

Warren, a long lean figure in white, reluctantly got up from his seat next to Janice and dropped at once.

"Welcome, Warren. And now Byron Henry, of the *Devilfish*."

Byron half rose from the other side of Janice, then sat down.

"Hi, Byron! Their father's a battleship man, folks, so the family's got the sea well covered. One reason our country remains strong and safe is that we have plenty of families like theirs." The governor and the admirals joined heartily in the clapping.

The first *Happy Hour* delighted the audience and promised great popular success. The little acts of the soldiers and sailors resembled church-social entertainment. It was an hour of sentimental Americana.

Byron was not amused. He sat through it all in a slouch, looking at his shoes. After the show the stage was crowded with top brass. "Wouldn't you know," Byron said sourly. "Branch Hoban's right in there." The handsome skipper of his submarine was talking to Cleveland and the governor like an old friend.

"You having trouble with Branch Hoban?" Warren said.

"He's having trouble with me."

"Hey, the big strong brothers! Come on up." Cleveland beckoned, laughing. "Gad, Madeline's one girl whose honor is safe, hey? Janice, the governor here has just invited me to lunch, and I've turned him down. Told him you're expecting me."

Janice gasped. "No, please, you mustn't do that."

The governor smiled. "It's all right. Hugh's coming over for cocktails later. I didn't realize Senator Lacouture's daughter was lurking in our midst. We must have you to dinner soon."

Janice took a bold chance. "Won't you join us for lunch, Governor? We're just having steaks and beer on the lawn."

"Sounds pretty good. Let me find my lady."

JANICE rode home in the governor's limousine. Madeline and Byron went with Warren in his old station wagon. The double lei of pink and yellow flowers around Madeline's neck perfumed the air in the car. "Well, well, just the three of us," she said gayly. "When did this last happen?"

"Listen, Briny," Warren said, "Branch Hoban's an old pal of mine. What's the beef? Maybe I can help."

"I drew a sketch of an air compressor for my officers' course book. He didn't like it. He wants me to do it over. I won't."

"That's ridiculous of you."

"Warren, on our way from San Francisco, an air compressor conked out because the oil pump froze. The chief was sick. I stripped down that compressor and got it going."

"Three cheers, but did you draw a good sketch?"

"It was lousy but I fixed the compressor; that's the whole point."

"No, the whole point is that Branch Hoban decides whether or not to recommend you for your dolphins."

"I don't care about getting dolphins. It wasn't my idea to go to submarine school. Dad shoved me in, mostly to keep me from marrying Natalie. That's why she went to Italy and why she's stuck there. God knows when I'll see my wife again. And my baby, if I've got one. That's what I care about, not that phony Hoban."

"Branch is no phony. He has a remarkable record. And you'd better make up your mind that he's boss man on that submarine."

"Sure he's boss man, but hell will freeze over before he gets another sketch from me. When I learned that Natalie had gone back to Italy to have her baby, I put in a request for transfer to the Atlantic. Our subs operate in and out of the Med, and I might have a chance to see her, even get her out. I told him all this. He lectured me about subordinating my personal life to the navy! He forwarded the request—'not recommending approval.'"

"Don't get me wrong, but it's not the navy's fault that your wife's stuck in Italy."

"I'm not blaming the navy. I'm telling you why I'm not on fire to please Branch Hoban." Byron took Madeline's lei and put it around his neck. "God knows when we three will ever be together again like this. I'm in a rotten mood, but I love you both."

At Warren's house, Byron read *Time* in a deck chair while Warren, Janice, and their guests grew gay on hors d'oeuvres and rum. At sea for two weeks, he had heard only fragmentary news.

When the party reached the stage of hula dancing, Warren began broiling steaks. Cleveland and Madeline did a barefoot hula while a photographer from the Honolulu *Star* took pictures. Byron wondered who was mad—he or this playful group. According to *Time*, the Germans were rolling through Russia exactly as they had through Poland two years before. The pictures showed villages afire, skies aswarm with Luftwaffe, roads jammed with refugees.

Carrying two plates of steak and french fries and a bottle of wine, Warren came and sat beside him. "Eat hearty, my lad."

"Thanks. Pretty grim issue of *Time*."

"Hell, Briny, you knew the Germans would take the Russkis."

The Russian's a hardy soldier, but Stalin shot half his officers in '38. You can't fight a war without career officers. That's where the Germans have us all licked, with that General Staff of theirs. How about some wine?"

"Sure." Byron slapped the copy of *Time*. "Your father-in-law wants us to explore making a deal with the Germans."

"I know. Well, he's way off base on that. Hitler's not making any deals, not while he's winning so big. But eventually, Briny, the Krauts may be easier to come to terms with than the Japs."

"Except for starters we'd have to shoot our Jews."

An embarrassed smile played on Warren's lips. "Even the Germans aren't shooting their Jews, guy." He looked at his watch. "Well, our little friend Vic's due for a bottle, but it's a cinch Jan's not going to abandon the governor."

"I'll feed the baby. I'd like to." While Victor lay on his uncle's lap drinking milk, Byron drank California Burgundy. Each finished his bottle at about the same time. He tucked the baby away in his side-porch crib and returned to the lawn. It was very hot, and the scent from the lemon trees filled Byron with melancholy. He lay down under a banyan tree and fell asleep. When he awoke, Lieutenant Aster, drink in hand, was shaking him.

"Blazes," Byron said, sitting up. "I was supposed to report back at three, wasn't I? Are you here to take me back in irons?"

"Amnesty. You've got twenty-four hours' leave." Aster grinned. "This just came in from Rome." He handed a dispatch to Byron:
ENSIGN BYRON HENRY, USS DEVILFISH X CAN YOU THINK OF A GOOD
NAME FOR A SEVEN POUND BOY X BOTH FINE BOTH LOVE YOU X NATALIE AND WHOSIS HENRY.

Byron bowed his head and put a hand over his face. He muttered a prayer of thanks for the miracle of a boy born from the wild lovemaking in Lisbon. After a moment he looked up, his eyes glistening. "How about that, Lady?"

"Congratulations, Briny."

Byron got to his feet. "I guess I'll tell my brother and sister."

Aster strolled beside him, rattling the ice in his glass. "Your sister-in-law is sure nice. I hardly had my foot inside the door when she handed me a planter's punch."

"Yes, Janice is okay. Say, Madeline—"

Hurrying toward the house behind Cleveland, Madeline said, "Long-distance call from New York. Our sponsor. Imagine!"

Byron told the news to Warren and Janice. Before he could stop her, Janice began to make a delighted announcement. Not waiting for congratulations, he went into the house after Madeline. He wanted to be the first to tell her. The telephone lay in its rack. He heard a chuckle, and glancing toward the side porch where the baby lay asleep, he saw Hugh Cleveland embracing Madeline. Cleveland was holding Byron's sister with both hands by the rump, and she was clinging to him with obscene intimacy. Byron went and found Warren. "I guess I'll get back to the *Devilfish*," he said.

"Why? I thought you had a twenty-four."

"I want to write some letters and shoot off a cable or two."

"Briny, the governor will soon be leaving for Washington Place with Cleveland and Madeline. Janice and I hoped you would—"

"Cleveland's in the house kissing Madeline. I mean kissing her, and she's right with it."

"Is she?" the aviator said with a crooked grin. "I guess their sponsor liked the broadcast."

Madeline came hurrying out of the house, her face alight. "Hey, guess what?" she chirruped. "We had a spot-check rating of 23.5. That's only four points less than Fred Allen!"

Byron showed the dispatch to his sister.

"Oh my! More good news! Hugh," she said, as Cleveland came up, "Briny's wife had her baby."

"Hey! Congrats, Papa!" He put out a hand that Byron ignored, but he took no offense. "Come on, Madeline, let's tell the governor what Chet Fenton said." Byron glowered at their departing backs.

Soon after four, as the governor was about to leave, Byron separated Madeline from the others. He said he wanted to talk to her and would take her to the governor's mansion in Warren's car.

"It's wonderful news about your baby, Briny," Madeline remarked as they drove off.

Byron said, looking at the road, "I went in the house to tell you. I saw you and Cleveland."

Her brows contracted in a scowl. "Is *this* why you offered to drive me to Washington Place? To lecture me? Thanks, dear."

"That's a married man, Madeline. Mom and Dad would be damned upset at what I saw."

"Don't talk to me about upsetting Mom and Dad. I have yet to marry a Jew."

Those were the last words spoken in the car until it drew up at Washington Place. Madeline opened the door. "I'm sorry, Briny. That was nasty. But didn't you deserve it, accusing me of God knows what? I have nothing against Natalie. I like her."

Byron reached across her and slammed the door shut. The glare on his white face was frightening. "One minute. You tell Hugh Cleveland that if I ever find out he's done anything to you, I'll put him in a hospital."

The girl's eyes filled with tears. "Oh, how dare you? Do you think I'd play around with a married man? Why, *The Happy Hour* was my idea. I was so excited I'd have kissed anybody."

"All right. I didn't want to make you cry."

"Don't you believe me? I thought we knew each other so well. I admit Hugh *would* sleep with me if he could. He'll sleep with anybody, and I find that disgusting. I appreciate your concern for my honor. You're very old-fashioned and sweet, like Dad, but don't worry about me. Forgive me for that mean crack, darling. I'm awfully happy about the baby." She kissed his cheek, then got out of the car and ran into Washington Place.

When Byron got back to the naval base, the *Devilfish* was deserted except for the watch. Byron took out of his desk drawer a writing pad and a record of a Portuguese folk song that he and Natalie had heard together in Lisbon. He put the record on the wardroom phonograph and started to write: "My darling—the news about the baby just came and—"

He put his head down on his arms, trying to picture his wife and the new baby, a boy who perhaps looked like Victor. Suddenly he got up and stopped the record. The next hour he spent drawing a sketch of an air compressor—a picture clear enough to be printed in a manual. To it he clipped a letter formally requesting transfer to Atlantic duty. He added a scrawled pencil note:

Captain—I deeply appreciate the twenty-four-hour leave. The only thing I want in the world now is to see my wife and baby, and get them out of Europe. I'm sure you will understand.

Next day Hoban congratulated Byron on his sketch, declared his conviction that Natalie and her baby were safe, and said he would forward the request, "not recommending approval."

37

Hotel National, Moscow
October 2, 1941

Dearest Rhoda—

Three hours from now I'll be dining in the Kremlin. How about that? And the rest of this trip has been every bit as fantastic. This will be a long letter—now that we have two grandsons (and how about *that*, Granny?) I'm beginning to feel I should put things down while they're fresh in my mind. So, after you've read these pages, tuck them away for the babies to read one day.

Excuse the typing mistakes, but Tudsbury's typewriter is cranky, and there's nobody here who can (or will) fix a British typewriter. I've been cadging embassy typewriters for my work, but they're swamped today getting out the final conference documents. The Tudsburies occupy the best quarters in the National—naturally! So here I sit looking out on Red Square, in a suite once used by Lenin. It's all maroon plush and a Persian rug about an acre big. Me, I'm on the top floor in a room about five by ten.

Tudsbury's in the next room dictating tonight's broadcast to Pamela. Leave it to Talky to show up where the action is! He got the War Information Office to requisition Pamela for him (his broadcasts are considered ace propaganda), and she's on extended leave from the WAAF.

Like all the correspondents here, Tudsbury's trying to make bricks without straw. The Russians keep them in Moscow and give them phony handouts. Most of them think the war's going badly, and some of the most pessimistic think Moscow may fall in a week! I don't, nor does Tudsbury; but our embassy people are nervous

about Averell Harriman being captured by the Nazis. They'll be mighty relieved tomorrow when the mission flies out.

Well, as to the trip—I haven't had a real night's sleep since I left Scotland in a British cruiser. The run to Archangel is a hot one, in Luftwaffe range almost all the way, but luckily we had fog cover about half the time. At Archangel, the harbor pilot turned out to be a woman! I watched her bring us in; she was quite a seaman, eased us alongside very handily. Then she shook hands with the skipper and left, and all that time she hadn't cracked a smile. Russians smile only when they're amused, never just to be pleasant. It's a problem communicating with them, for, language aside, we just have different natures and ways.

Archangel is a town in the northern wilds all built of wood. Piers, warehouses, sawmills, factories, churches, crane towers—wood. God knows how many trees were cut down to build that town, yet its surrounding forests look untouched. Mr. Hopkins had told me about the forests of Russia, but I still was amazed. We flew to Moscow at treetop height. Green branches rushed by below our wings for hours and hours, and then all at once ahead of us was a tremendous sprawl of houses and factories. As the pilot flew a circle around Moscow before landing, maybe as a special courtesy, we got a good look at the onion-top churches and the dark red Kremlin by the river, with a cluster of churches inside!

Since we got here we've been in the meat grinder around the clock. When we aren't conferring, we're eating and drinking. The standard fare for visitors seems to be a dozen kinds of cold fish and caviar, then two soups, then fowl, then roasts, with wine and vodka going all the time. Despite the communication problem, I think this conference has been a historic breakthrough. When have Americans and Russians sat down before to talk about military problems, however cagily? The Russians don't tell hard facts of their situation. Considering that the Germans three short months ago were sitting where we sit now, I don't exactly blame them. This is a point that our interpreter, Leslie Slote, keeps making.

I'm not revealing secrets when I tell you the British are yielding some Lend-Lease priorities and even undertaking to send the Russians tanks. It makes some of us Americans feel damn peculiar.

The British, in danger themselves, are willing to help the Russians, while our Congress yells about sending the Russians anything.

Do you remember Slote? He's the second secretary here now. He's the man Natalie went to visit in Poland. He still seems to think she's the finest girl alive, and I don't know why he didn't marry her when he had the chance. Right now he's trying to romance Talky's daughter. She's just sweated out a vigil for her fiancé, who escaped from a German prison camp in June and hadn't been heard from until she had a letter from him this week. He's home, with a bullet in his thigh. He had some adventures in France and Belgium straight out of the movies. Pam's planning to go home to marry him.

Now I have a story for you, and for our grandsons, especially Byron's boy. It's grim and puzzling. Yesterday, between the afternoon conference and the official dinner at the Metropole, I went to see Slote at our embassy for a while with Tudsbury and Pam.

We were having a drink when another visitor was announced, and in walked a fellow in worn-out boots and a heavy, shabby coat. It was a Jewish merchant from Warsaw, Jochanan Jastrow, Natalie's uncle! The one they call Berel. Briny and Natalie were at his son's wedding when they got caught in the invasion. He's clean-shaven, and speaks Russian and German with ease, and he doesn't seem Jewish, though Slote remarked that in Warsaw he wore a beard and looked like a rabbi. Obviously he has a talent for surviving. How he got the remnants of his family out of Warsaw, and then out from under the German blitz in Minsk, is a saga.

But here comes the incredible part. Jastrow says that one night, about a month after the capture of Minsk, the Germans came into the ghetto and trucked out several thousand people. They drove them to a ravine, and there they shot them, and buried them in a huge, freshly dug ditch. Some Russians who had been forced to dig the ditch earlier had sneaked back through the woods to see what it was for, and so the story got out. One of them had a camera. Jastrow gave Slote three pictures, and two documents in Russian that purported to be eyewitness accounts. He says he risked his life to get to Moscow so he could give some American diplomat the story. He evidently believes that once Roosevelt knows about it and tells the American people, the U.S. will declare war on Germany.

When Jastrow had gone, Slote offered the stuff to Tudsbury for his broadcast. To our surprise, Tudsbury wouldn't touch it. To him Jastrow looked like a plant by the NKVD—the Russian secret police. It was too coincidental that a Polish relative of mine by marriage—a freakish enough connection to begin with—should suddenly pop up in Moscow with a yarn like this. But even if he knew the story were true, he said he wouldn't use it because it could backfire and keep America out of the war. "*Nobody wants to fight a war to save the Jews,*" he kept insisting, and Hitler still has a lot of people convinced that anyone who fights Germany is spilling blood just for the Jews.

Personally, I found it hard not to believe Jastrow; the man has such a keen and dignified manner. If there's even an element of truth in what he said, the Germans really have run amok, and among other things Natalie and her infant, if they're in Italy, are in grave hazard. Mussolini apes Hitler. But Slote tells me she was all set to get out before her confinement.

It's five minutes to six. I have to wrap this up and get on to the banquet. You know, I've now met Hitler, Churchill, Roosevelt, and tonight I may shake hands with Stalin. Considering that I'm nobody much, that's something! Only at this point, so help me, I would gladly trade dinner in the Kremlin for one honest-to-God whiff of navy stack gas.

I miss you, busy as I am, but you sure wouldn't care for Soviet Russia, darling, in war or peace.

Till the next time, with lots of love—

Pug

THE knot of Leslie Slote's tie came lopsided twice in his shaky, hurrying hands. He put on his jacket and stretched out on a sofa to calm himself with a cigarette. A German correspondent had abandoned this apartment on June 15, making a hasty deal with him. For Moscow, they were splendid digs. Pamela Tudsbury had cooked many a dinner here for Slote and some of their friends.

The English-speaking embassy people and correspondents—an isolated, gossipy little band—assumed that the British girl and the American Foreign Service officer were having an affair. Slote

yearned for such an affair. He had not gotten over Natalie, and nothing closed an ego wound like a new romance. But Pam Tudsbury was being true, she said, to her RAF pilot.

Slote had patiently been taking Pamela on her terms, biding his chances to improve them. But the arrival of Captain Victor Henry changed all that. As soon as he saw her with Pug, he knew he was looking at a woman in love; so much for her airman! As for Captain Henry, who looked to Slote like the typical military man—poker-faced, firm, and colorless—one couldn't tell whether he even liked Pamela. Slote failed to fathom the attraction this middle-aged dullard held for her, as he had also never understood Natalie's infatuation with the man's son.

Fate had served him a strange dish, Leslie Slote thought—to be beaten out for one girl by the son and then for another by the father. And now he was about to meet the father and Admiral Standley at the Hotel National; he was going to interpret for them at the Kremlin banquet. This privilege did not, in prospect, make him happy. He was in a state of panicky foreboding.

During the first weeks after the invasion in June, Slote's physical cowardice had not plagued him. He believed the Soviet news, believed that six hundred miles and the great Red Army lay between him and the Germans. The peaceable, good-natured Muscovites placidly piled sandbags, taped windows, held drills for air raids that didn't come, and otherwise went about their business as before. It appeared that the Soviet Union had met the onslaught at its distant borders and dealt the Nazis their first big defeat, exactly as Radio Moscow claimed.

Then Minsk fell, then Smolensk, then Kiev. Air raids started; the Luftwaffe had come into range. Nobody else in the embassy was as alarmed as Slote, but nobody else had undergone the ordeal of Warsaw. Slote thought the other Americans' complacency insane. Moscow's thick antiaircraft barrage provided a comforting canopy; yet bombs fell. The terror of the siege guns was still to come.

In fact, although Slote could not know it, when the Harriman-Beaverbrook mission arrived the Germans were just starting their autumn smash toward Moscow. The panzer armies were breaking through less than a hundred miles away. The Russians carried on

the meetings and entertainment with no hint that anything was wrong; though they did appear a bit brisk in laying on a farewell banquet less than a week after the guests had got there.

They were giving the Americans and British to understand that the Nazi hordes had been pinned down east of Smolensk for more than a month. It was true that there had been a lull on the central part of the front, for in August Hitler had diverted some of his panzer divisions to help take Kiev and invest Leningrad. But now, at the beginning of October, the panzer armies, back in their positions, were slashing toward Moscow again.

Filled with horror by Berel Jastrow's story, Slote wondered how safe he would be, even if he survived the siege. A triumphant Hitler might declare war on Roosevelt. Americans might all be taken to a ravine and shot like the Jews in Minsk. So he thought as he left to accompany Admiral Standley and Captain Henry to the Kremlin.

BLACK limousines clustered before the hotel, a rare sight. Moscow's auto traffic had dwindled to nothing. Muscovites, taking evening strolls in their usual large numbers, cast inquisitive glances as the cars began to fill with well-dressed foreigners.

"How did you make out on those harbor charts?" said Admiral Standley to Victor Henry, settling into the back seat and disregarding their secret-police escort. The President had called the former chief of naval operations out of retirement for this mission, and Slote couldn't make him stop talking near NKVD agents.

"I got nowhere," Pug replied. "As for operating codes and signals, forget it. Their fellow told me that they had no such things."

"What tripel Did you give them our stuff?"

"Well, I showed them our General Signal Book and a few strip ciphers, and almost got into a wrestling match with that fat little rear admiral. He started to put them away in his briefcase. But I said no tickee no shirtee."

"No! Did you really?" said the admiral. "We're supposed to give, give, give. I'm ashamed of you, Pug, and damn glad you're along."

"If we're going to plan convoys to Murmansk or Archangel, we've got to swap operational codes," Pug said. "We're not asking for secret combat channels. This is for seamanship and piloting."

"Russians are obsessed with secrecy," Slote said. "Be persistent and patient."

"That won't help," said the admiral. "These birds just haven't gotten the green light from Mr. Big, and until they do, no dice."

At this stream of slang, the NKVD escort squinted narrow Tartar eyes at the admiral. The cars were stopping at a tall gateway under a red stone tower topped by a star. The limousines, checked one at a time by uniformed sentries, drove into the Kremlin, stopped at an inner gate for another check, then passed among bizarre old churches to a large building with a majestic stone façade.

The visitors, with Russian officers mingling among them, left the cars and mounted the steps. Suddenly the palace doors opened, and they were blinking at dazzling light from globed chandeliers in a long hall, ending in a red-carpeted marble staircase. Attendants helped them with coats and hats. Along the mirrored walls, combs and brushes were neatly laid out on tables.

"Thoughtful touch, this," Victor Henry said to Slote. "Did you get that Minsk atrocity stuff to the ambassador?"

Slote nodded. "I wanted it to go to Secretary Hull, high priority. But the ambassador said it's to be forwarded through channels."

Pug wrinkled his nose. "Your department always drags its feet on the Jews. Show it to some American newspaperman."

"The boss directly ordered me not to."

Young army officers, handsome clear-eyed giants, ushered the visitors toward the staircase. Walking beside Slote, Pug said, "Suppose you had Fred Fearing up for a drink? A reporter will steal a scoop from his old blind grandmother, you know."

"Are you suggesting that I disobey orders?"

"I don't think that story should get buried."

They passed through one vast room after another, apparently unaltered since czarist days. In one room grander and richer than the rest, pillared in marble, with a vaulted gilt ceiling and red damask-covered walls, the company of about eighty men halted.

Mirrored doors opened and a party of Russian civilians came in, wearing unpressed flopping trousers and ill-fitting double-breasted jackets. Slote recognized faces that lined Lenin's tomb at May Day parades: Molotov, Kaganovich, Suslov, Mikoyan.

"Look at those guys come on," Victor Henry said. "They make you feel the revolution was last week." The inelegance of the Communist bosses had jarred Slote too.

"That's the Politburo, Captain," Slote said. "Very big cheeses."

Introductions began. Liveried waiters passed vodka in little tulip-shaped glasses, and plates of pastry sticks. A short man with a paunch walked in alone, smoking a cigarette. No ceremony was made of it, but everyone in the grand state chamber by subtle movements polarized toward this man, for he was Stalin.

The Communist dictator moved through the room, attention focused on him like a spotlight. He put out his hand to Admiral Standley. "*Stalyin*," he said. His slanted eyes, thick backswept grizzled hair, and arching mustache and eyebrows gave him a genial leonine look. Unlike the other Communists, he wore a uniform of simple beige cloth superbly tailored, with sharply creased trousers tucked into soft, gleaming brown boots.

Leslie Slote introduced the naval officers. Captain Henry said in slow Russian, "Sir, I will tell this story to my grandchildren."

Stalin said pleasantly, "Yes? Do you have any?"

"Two boys."

"And do you have sons?" Stalin seemed diverted by Victor Henry's slow, carefully drilled, mechanical speech.

"Two, Mr. Chairman. One is a navy flier, one is in a submarine." As Stalin kept looking at him, Pug went on, "Forgive my poor Russian. I had Russian playmates once. But that was long ago."

"Where did you have Russian playmates?"

"I was born near the Russian River, in California. Some of those early families still remain there."

Stalin smiled a real smile, showing tobacco-stained teeth. "Ah, yes, yes. Fort Ross. Not many people know that we settled California before you did. Maybe it's time we claimed California back."

"They say your policy is for one fighting front at a time, Mr. Chairman."

With a smiling grunt, Stalin said, "Ha," struck Victor Henry lightly on the shoulder, and walked on.

"Now what the hell was all that, Pug?" said the admiral.

Pug recounted the chat. The admiral laughed. "Well done."

"I must compliment you," Slote said. "You spoke with presence of mind, and he enjoyed it."

"He puts you at your ease," Pug said. "I knew I was murdering the grammar, but he never let on."

Soon the large company was moving again, this time into a stupendous banquet hall of white marble, red tapestries, and shiny parquet, where silver, gold, and glass glittered on the white cloths of many tables set amid green stone columns. Light flooded from the myriad frosted globes of two gigantic baroque gilt chandeliers hanging from a high ceiling of vermilion and gold.

"Wow!" Pug said.

"It's the Catherine the Great Room," Slote said. "I've seen it in paintings. There's her crest, in those big medallions."

"Well, if this is their style of living, by God," said the admiral, "they'll make a Communist of me yet."

"I wouldn't be surprised," Slote replied, "if this is the first time the room has been used since the revolution."

The menu, printed in Russian and English on thick creamy paper, with a hammer and sickle gold crest, filled the entire long page. Attendants began to bring the courses, while others poured wine and vodka. The splendor of it all, and the line of powerful men on the dais, with Stalin chatting left and right with Beaverbrook and Harriman, gave Pug a reassuring sense of Russian resources, Russian largesse, and Russian self-confidence.

"*Vashe zdorovye!*" (Your health!) Anybody apparently could stand and bawl a toast when he felt like it. Men left their seats and crossed the room to clink glasses when a toast pleased them. Stalin, too, kept trotting here and there, glass in hand.

To Slote it was all marvelously interesting, but he was missing too much, interpreting the sharpening exchange between Admiral Standley and the short, fat Russian admiral who had tried to keep the navy codes. Why wouldn't that mighty American navy at least convoy Lend-Lease goods to England? the Russian shouted. Were they afraid of a few tin-plated U-boats?

"Tell him we'll be convoying any day," snapped the American, "but unless he loosens up with some harbor data and operation signals, hell will freeze over before we convoy to Murmansk."

The old Russian admiral now pushed himself to his feet, clinked furiously at a glass until he got some attention, then held up a brimming glass of vodka. "If you please! I am sitting with representatives of the most powerful navy in the world. These brave men must be very unhappy that while all humanity is in mortal danger their ships ride at anchor gathering barnacles"—he turned to the American admiral—"so I drink to the day when this strong navy will get in the scrap and help destroy the Hitlerite rats."

There was a silence as Slote translated. Military and civilian Russians at nearby tables exchanged troubled looks. The old man dropped heavily in his seat, glaring around with self-satisfaction.

Admiral Standley's voice shook as he said to Slote, "If I reply you'll have an international incident."

Victor Henry said at once, "Admiral, shall I give it a try?"

"It's all yours, Pug."

Victor Henry rose, glass in hand. All eyes fastened on him while he brought out his response in slow, painful phrases.

"My chief tells me to respond for the United States Navy. It is true we are not fighting. I drink first to the wise peace policy of Marshal Stalin, who did not lead your country into the war before you were attacked, and so gained time to prepare." Slote was startled by the barbed aptness of the retort. *The wise peace policy of Comrade Stalin* was the Communist cliché for Stalin's deal with Hitler. "That is the policy of our President. If we are attacked we will fight. I hope as well as your people are fighting. Now as for"—Pug stopped to ask Slote for the Russian word—"barnacles. Any barnacles that get on our ships nowadays will have to swim very fast. We don't announce everything we do. Secrecy is another wise policy of both our countries. But let's not keep so many secrets from each other that we can't work together."

"Now, our navy needs some harbor data, weather codes, and so forth from you. We need them before we leave. Since this is a farewell banquet, I also drink to some fast action. Finally, I was a naval attaché in Berlin. I have now traveled from Hitler's chancellery to the inside of the Kremlin. That is something Hitler will never do, and above all I drink to that."

There was loud applause, raising of glasses, and shouts of "Your

health!" "Fast action!" Slote reached up to stop Pug from drinking, and pointed. Josef Stalin, glass in hand, was leaving his seat.

"Holy smoke, what's the etiquette on this?"

"I don't know," Slote said. "But by God, Captain Henry, that was rising to an occasion."

Pug strode toward Stalin and met him near the dais. The dictator said with a grin as they clinked glasses, "I thank you for that fine toast, and in response, you can keep California."

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman," Pug said. "That's a good start, and can you do anything else for us?"

"Certainly. Fast action," said Stalin, linking his arm in Pug's. "American style. We Russians can sometimes do it too." He walked toward the old Russian admiral and spoke to him in low, rapid sentences. The admiral looked popeyed. Then the dictator turned beaming to Victor Henry. "Well, it is arranged. Tell your chief that we do not intentionally embarrass our guests. Tell him I feel the American navy will do historic things in this struggle, and will rule the ocean when peace comes."

As Slote translated, Admiral Standley stood and grasped the dictator's hand. Stalin went back to his table to make the last toast of the evening—to President Roosevelt. The interpreter was Oumansky, the ambassador to the United States, whose well-cut suit marked him off from the other Russians. "Comrade Stalin says *may God help President Roosevelt in his most difficult task.*"

This religious phrase brought a surprised stillness, then a surge of all the banqueters to their feet; all over the room the banquet dissolved in handshaking, backslapping, and embracing.

THE limousine took the Americans back to the Hotel National. In the small, cold foyer, one dim lamp burned at the desk. The elevator stood open, dark and abandoned. The admiral bade Pug and Slote good night and plodded to the staircase.

"Come up for a minute," Pug said to Leslie Slote.

"No thanks. I'll grope my way to my apartment. It's not far."

Pug insisted, and Slote followed him up to his room. "I don't rate like Tudsbury," Pug said. He unlocked a suitcase, took a dispatch case out, unlocked that, and glanced through papers.

"I hope you understand," Slote said, "that those locks are meaningless. All the contents of that case have been photographed."

"Yes," Pug said absently. He slipped a letter into his pocket. "Would you like a snooze? Please stick around for a while. Something may be doing."

Out of his new respect for Victor Henry, Slote asked no questions, but stretched out on the hard narrow bed. Next thing he knew, knocking woke him. Victor Henry was at the door, talking in Russian to a man in a black leather coat. He closed the door. "I'd like you to come with me, Leslie, if you will. Back to the Kremlin. I have a letter from Harry Hopkins for the big cheese. I didn't think I was going to get to hand it over in person, but maybe I am."

Slote sat up. "Good Lord, does the ambassador know this?"

"Admiral Standley brought him a note from the President. I gather he was annoyed, but he knows."

"Annoyed! I should think so. This is outlandish, Captain Henry. Nobody should ever, ever see a head of state without going through our ambassador. How have you arranged this?"

"Me? I had nothing to do with it. Hopkins wanted this letter to go to Stalin privately. I gather he talked to Oumansky. If it puts you in a false position, I'll go alone. There'll be an interpreter."

Calculating the angles in this astonishing business—mainly the angle of professional self-preservation—Slote began combing his hair. "I'll have to file a written report with the ambassador."

"Sure."

IN A big, bleakly lit room lined with wall maps, Stalin sat at one end of a conference table, with many papers piled before him. An ashtray at his elbow brimmed with cigarette butts, suggesting that he had been steadily at work since the end of the banquet. He now wore a sagging khaki uniform, and he looked very weary. Pavlov, his usual interpreter, sat beside him. There was nobody else. As the two Americans were ushered in, Stalin rose and shook hands. He waved them to chairs, and then sat down himself.

Victor Henry handed him the letter and a round box wrapped in blue paper. "Mr. Chairman, I'd better not inflict my bad Russian on you any longer," he said in English. Slote translated.

Stalin replied in Russian, "As you wish." He opened the White House envelope and passed to Pavlov the single handwritten sheet.

Pug said, as Stalin unwrapped the box, "And this is the special Virginia pipe tobacco Mr. Hopkins told you about." Pavlov translated this and everything that passed thereafter.

"Mr. Hopkins is very thoughtful." Stalin twisted open the tin and pulled a pipe from his pocket. He puffed fragrant smoke while Pavlov translated the letter aloud. After a meditative silence, the dictator turned to Victor Henry with a veiled cold look. "This is a strange letter from Mr. Hopkins. We all know how many millions of automobiles the United States manufactures per year. What is the problem, then, with landing craft? Surely you can produce as many as you want to. Surely the British have plenty already. I cannot see this as a real obstacle to a second front in Europe now, as Mr. Hopkins states."

Pug pulled from his dispatch case sketches and production tables of landing craft. "Different types must be designed, Mr. Chairman, to land against a solidly fortified coast. We expect mass production by mid-1942. These papers may be of interest."

Unexpectedly, in midtranslation, Stalin uttered a short harsh laugh and began to talk fast in Russian, straight at Victor Henry. "Very fine! This is October 1941. If Mr. Hitler would only halt operations until mid-1942! But perhaps we cannot count on that. I regard Mr. Hopkins as a friend and a clever man. Doesn't he know that any operation at all that the British mount now—even a reconnaissance in force of a few divisions—might divert enough German strength from here to decide the course of this war? The Germans have mere token forces on the French coast. They are throwing everything onto our front." Stalin doodled in red ink on a pad, drawing a wolf, while Pavlov interpreted.

Victor Henry said, "Mr. Chairman, I am instructed to answer any questions about landing craft."

Stalin shoved aside Pug Henry's papers. "It is a question of will, not of landing craft. However, we will study the matter of landing craft. Of course, we have such machines too, for landing on defended coasts. The Japanese have in recent years put ashore more than a million soldiers in China. Those men surely did not swim

across. So I hope Mr. Harry Hopkins will use his great influence to establish a second front now in Europe, because the outcome of the war may turn on that. I can say no more."

During the translation, the dictator started another wolf, with bared fangs and a hanging tongue. He looked up at Pug with a genial expression, and changed his tone. "Have you enjoyed your stay? Is there anything we can do for you?"

"Mr. Chairman, I have been a military observer in Germany and in England. Mr. Hopkins asked me to go to the front here, if an opportunity arose, so as to bring him an eyewitness report."

At the word "front," Stalin shook his head. "No, no. We are obliged to guarantee the safety of our guests. That we cannot do, in the present stage of fighting." An opaque wild look came into his gaze. "You should understand that things are bad. The Germans are breaking through in force. We may see the worst hours for Russia since 1812."

Pug said soberly, "In view of this news, Mr. Chairman, I admire your cheerfulness of spirit at the banquet tonight."

Stalin shrugged his broad, sagging shoulders. "Wars are not won by gloom, nor by bad hospitality. Well, if Mr. Hopkins wants you at the front, we will see what we can do. Please tell him my feelings about the second front. Perhaps you could bring home to him and your great President the urgency. I wish you well."

Leaving the Kremlin, the two Americans spoke not a word. When the car stopped, Pug said, "I'll talk to you tomorrow, Slote."

"I'll get out with you." On the sidewalk, Slote said, "Let's talk here. I was utterly shocked by this front business. If Mr. Hopkins knew of the catastrophic situation Stalin just admitted to, he would surely withdraw those instructions."

The night was ending, and Pug could just see Slote's pale face under his fur hat. "I don't agree. Hopkins is a pretty tough customer. If an okay comes through, Leslie, I'll go."

"Why, for God's sake?" Slote broke out in a shrill tone. He lowered his voice. "At best you'll see one tiny sector for a few hours. It's foolhardy sight-seeing, and it'll create endless trouble."

Pug lit a cigarette. "Listen, if you can watch ten men under fire, you'll learn a lot about an army's morale in a few hours. Doing this

job might give me the illusion that I'm earning my salary. Come up for a nightcap."

"No, thank you. I must go and write my report."

Slote walked home through the dead quiet streets in the violet light of dawn. In his flat, he brewed coffee and typed a long account of the banquet and the meeting with Stalin. When he had finished, he threw back the blackout curtains. The sun was shining. Staggering, bleary, he took a looseleaf diary from a drawer and wrote briefly in it, ending with these words:

As for the Henrys, father and son, they both have an instinct for action and the presence of mind that goes with it. Byron displayed these traits in moments of physical danger. I've just seen his father, in sophisticated and subtle confrontations with Stalin, act with quick thinking, hardihood, and tact. I can now understand why the ladies like such men.

Possibly one can't change one's nature. Still one can perhaps learn and grow. Captain Henry suggested that I disregard orders and expose the Minsk documents to Fred Fearing. Such an act goes entirely against my grain; and entirely for that reason, I intend to do it today.

38

TUDSBURY was having five-o'clock tea alone in his hotel suite when Pug came in and told him he was going to the front. The correspondent stopped eating. "Good God, man, you *are*? With the Germans swarming in all over the place? It's impossible. These Russians are putting you off with talk. You'll never go."

"Well, maybe," Pug said, sinking into a chair and holding on his lap the briefcase stuffed with codes and harbor charts which he had just collected at the Navy Ministry. He had had five or six hours' broken sleep in four days. The room was jerking back and forth in his vision as he strove to stay awake. "But my clearance has just come in from pretty high up."

Tudsbury peered at Pug and said quietly, "I'll go with you."

"The hell you will."

"Victor, the correspondents went to the central front two weeks

ago. That day I had flu, with a sizzling temperature." Tudsbury stood up and got his coat. "Who's handling this? Lozovsky? I'll just tell him you said I could come. It's up to you."

Pug did not want Tudsbury along, but he was too exhausted to refuse. "Okay."

The intrusion of Tudsbury snagged the trip. Days went by while the Narkomindel—the Foreign Office—hemmed, hawed, and stalled. The main trouble, it turned out, was Pamela. Her father had asked to take her along, claiming helplessness without her. Vice Foreign Commissar Lozovsky began to lose his genial humor when Pug appeared or telephoned. "My dear Captain Henry, you will hear when you will hear."

So Pug wandered the streets. There were long queues at food shops, despite the incessant rain. Under sodden caps and shawls, the high-cheekboned faces were strained. Victor Henry thought that the approach of the Germans made the Muscovites look more like New Yorkers.

Lozovsky finally telephoned, his voice ringing cheerily. "Well, Captain, tomorrow at dawn? Wear warm clothing, a raincoat, and good boots, and be prepared to be out three or four days."

THEY left Moscow in the rain, their car grinding along in a thunderous parade of army trucks. Their guide was a mild-faced tank colonel with the odd name of Porphyry Amphiteatrov. After a few hours he suggested that they stop to eat lunch and stretch their legs. The little black automobile, a Russian M-1 that looked and sounded like a 1930 Ford, made cramped quarters, especially with unexplained packages lining the floor.

The driver turned off to a side road lined with old trees. They wound among fields and copses of birch, glimpsing two large white country houses in the distance. At a dead end in wild woods they got out, and the colonel led them to a small, grassy mound where garlands of fresh flowers lay.

"This was Tolstoy's estate," he said, "and there is his grave. Since it was on the way, I thought you might be interested."

Tudsbury stared at the mound. "The grave of Tolstoy? No stone?"

"He ordered it so. 'Put me in the earth,' he said, 'in the woods

where my brother Nicholas and I played as boys. . . .” There was a sound of soft irregular thumps. Amphiteatrov said, “Well, when the wind is right, the sound carries quite far.”

“Ah, guns?” said Tudsbury, with great calm.

“Yes, guns. Well, shall we have a bite?”

Out of sight of the burial spot, under a dripping tree, they ate black bread, garlicky sausages, and cucumbers, washed down with beer. Pamela broke a long silence. “Who put the flowers there?”

“The caretakers, I suppose,” said the colonel.

“The Germans must never get this far,” she said.

“Well, that’s a spiritual thought,” the colonel said, smiling. “I don’t think they will, but the great Tolstoy must now take his chances with the rest of us.”

The sun broke through and birds began to sing. Light shafted theatrically through the yellow leaves, full on Pamela, sitting with Victor Henry on a bench. She wore dark slacks tucked into fur-topped boots, and a gray fur-trimmed coat and hat.

“Why are you staring at me, Victor?”

“Pam, I’ve never visited Tolstoy’s grave before, but I swear I remember all this, and most of all the nice way you’ve got that hat tilted.” As her hand went up to her head he added, “And I could have told you you’d lift that hand, and the sun would make your ring sparkle.”

She looked at the diamond. “When Ted produced it, I wasn’t quite ready to wear it. We had a bit of a spat.”

The colonel said, “Well, Captain, I think we go?”

Trucks filled the highway, moving toward the front and returning. Whiskered men and stout women, working in fields between stretches of birch forest, paid no attention to the war vehicles. In villages, washing hung outside the houses. Pug noted that the farther one got from the scurrying, apprehensive capital, and the nearer to the front, the more normal and peaceful Russia appeared.

Toward evening, the car rolled into a small town and stopped at a yellow frame house on a muddy square. Here red-cheeked children lined up at a pump with pails; others were driving in goats and cows from the fields. German artillery thumped, and its yellow flashes flickered like lightning on the western horizon.

In the dining room of the yellow house, now a regiment headquarters, the visitors crowded around the table with four officers of the regiment and a General Yevlenko, the chief of staff of the army group in that sector. Much taken with Pamela, Yevlenko kept passing gallant compliments, and urging food and drink on her. The feast which appeared was almost in Kremlin style: champagne, caviar, soup, fowls, steaks, and cream cakes. The mystery of this magnificence was cleared up when Pug Henry glanced into the kitchen and saw their driver, in a white apron, sweating over the stove. Pug had seen him carrying boxes from the car into the house. He was really a superb cook.

The general talked freely about the war. His army group was outnumbered in this sector and had far fewer tanks and guns than the Nazis. Still, they might yet surprise Fritz. The Germans were taking fearful losses. He reeled off many figures of tanks destroyed, guns captured, men killed.

"Will they take Moscow?" Tudsbury asked.

"Not from this direction," retorted the general, "nor do I think they will from any other. But if they do take it, we'll drive them out again, and out of our land. We are going to beat them. They overestimated themselves and underrated us—a dangerous mistake." He glanced at Victor Henry. "Well, Captain, as the situation is a bit fluid, I suggest you make a start at dawn." He said to Pamela, gesturing upward, "A bedroom has been cleared for you. The gentlemen will bunk with these officers."

"Good heavens, a bedroom? I counted on sleeping on the floor in my clothes," Pamela said. "Anyway, I'm not at all sleepy yet."

As the colonel translated, Yevlenko's face lit up. "So? You talk like one of our girls, not like a delicate Englishwoman." Offering her his arm, he led them into the next room, where worn maps hung on the walls. Soldiers pushed away desks to clear a space around a shabby upright piano. An officer, cigarette dangling from his mouth, thumped out "There'll Always Be an England." Pamela laughed, then stood and sang it. The general led applause and called for more champagne. The pianist began stumbling through "Alexander's Ragtime Band." With an elegant low bow, General Yevlenko invited Pamela to dance. They made a grotesque pair,

he head and shoulders above her, two-stepping stiffly around in heavy muddy boots, but his face shone with enjoyment. She danced with other officers, then with the general again, as soldiers crowded in to watch.

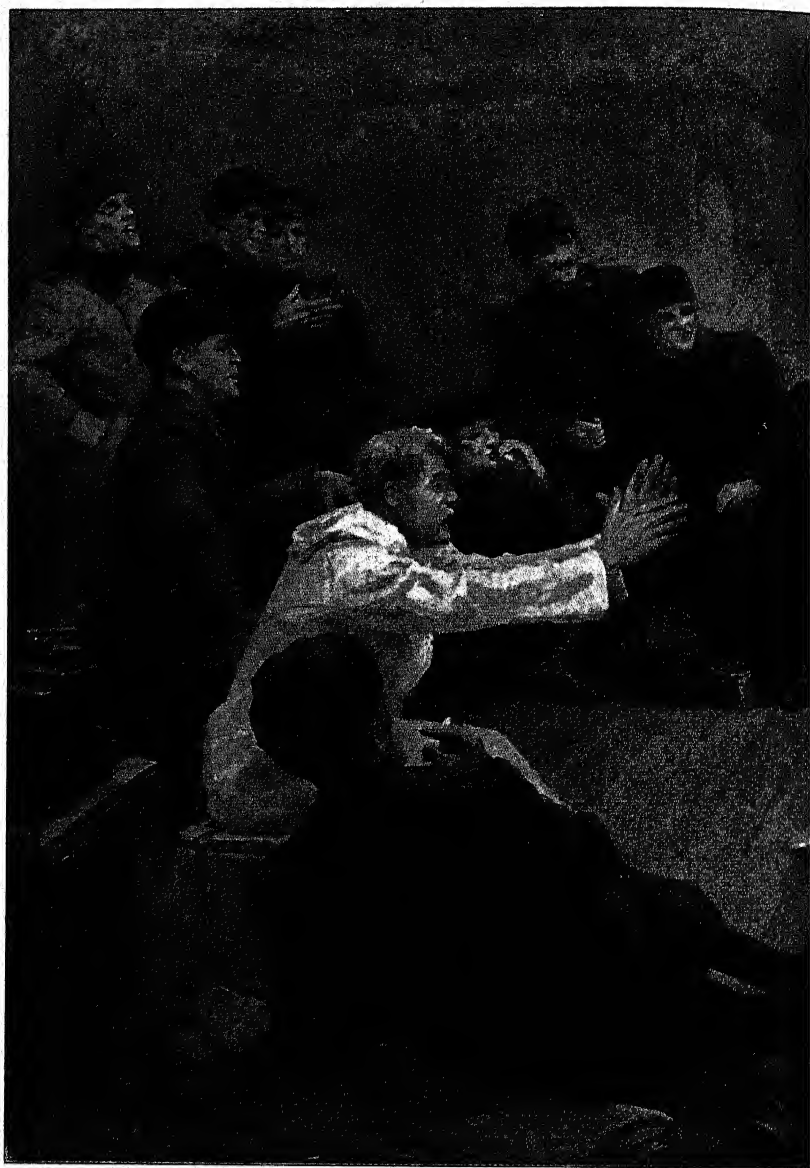
The pianist began playing Russian music, and Pamela sank into a chair while the officers danced, bounding, squatting, pirouetting. The general danced by himself; he twirled, jumped, then folded his arms and squatted, kicking his feet and shouting, "*Skoreye! Skoreye!*" (Faster! Faster!) The room reeked of men's bodies, smoke, alcohol. When General Yevlenko finished with a shout, the men roared and clapped, and Pamela jumped up and kissed his big red face and he heartily kissed her mouth, causing laughter and more roars; and that was the end.

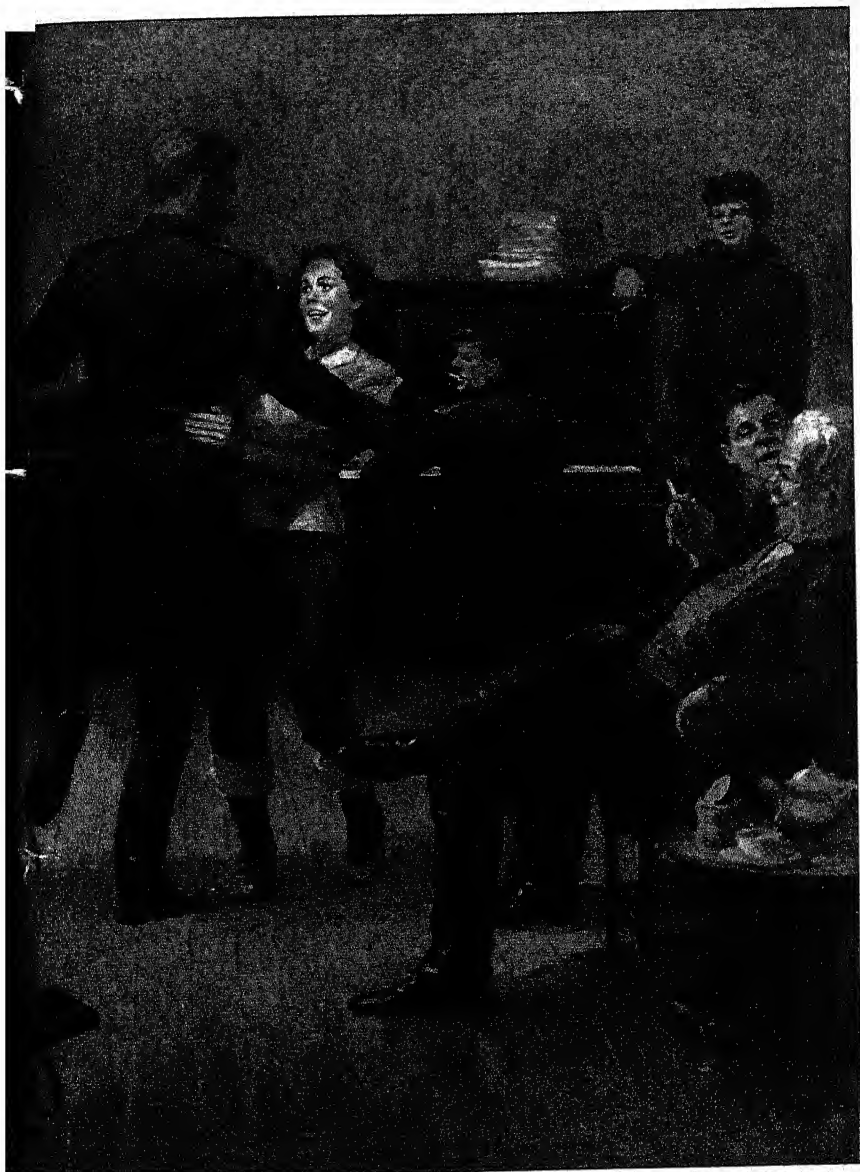
AT DAWN, it was raining hard. The back seat of the car was roomier, since many of the packages were gone. Pamela, squeezed between her father and Pug, had managed a touch of makeup. Pug thought she looked like a movie star visiting the troops.

"Well, we go," said Colonel Amphiteatrov. "In this weather we will go not so far." The chef drove well, and he kept the car going through terrible ruts, mounds, and holes for perhaps twenty minutes. Then it stopped dead. Pug got out with the driver and the colonel. The hubs of the rear wheels were buried in red mud.

The colonel walked off into the woods. Pug heard voices, then engine snorts. The bushes began to move. Pug had been looking straight at a camouflaged cannon on a light tank, yet had not noticed it until it started toward him. Behind it walked the colonel and three muddy men. The soldiers quickly attached a chain, and the car was pulled loose in a moment. Thus they were bogged and rescued several times, and so discovered that the wet, silent forest was swarming with the Red Army.

One of the rescue squads, at a washout that severed the road like a creek in flood, was a sizable crew, all dressed alike in a red earth color. There was no way of telling the lieutenant from his men, except that he gave the orders. He invited the visitors to stop and refresh themselves, and took them down into an icy, mucky dugout so masked by brush that Pug did not see an en-





trance until the officer began to sink into the earth. The dugout was an underground cabin of tarred logs crisscrossed with telephone cables and lit by an oil lamp. The officer, squinting proudly at a brass samovar on the raw plank table, offered them tea.

Before they left, the lieutenant showed Pug and Tudsbury the soldiers' dugouts; they had heavy timbered roofs that might survive a shell hit. Pug saw men eating chunks of gray bread and dollops of stew from a tureen. Healthy-looking, they seemed as much at home in the red earth as earthworms, and almost as tough and abundant. Here Victor Henry first got an ineradicable feeling that Yevlenko had told the truth: that for all the Germans' victories, the Red Army would in time drive them out.

"Well, we are not far now from our destination," Amphiteatrov said, as the car bumped out of the woods into cleared fields that stretched for miles ahead. "There's where we're going." He pointed to a distant line of forest. Though the road ahead looked good, the driver suddenly slithered the car sharp right.

"It's mined," the colonel explained. "This whole area."

Pug said, somewhat chilled, "Nice to know."

They jolted along the soupy track, never passing a road marker or signpost. There was no sun, and Pug gave up trying to guess the direction. The artillery thumps were sometimes louder, sometimes fainter. But zigzags in the front could cause that. The car appeared to be meandering five miles or so behind the fire zone.

"Here we will stretch our legs for a minute," the colonel said, as the driver stopped at the edge of a grain field. "You will see something interesting." He gave Pamela an odd look. "But you might find this walk boring. Perhaps you will stay with the driver?"

"I'll come, unless you tell me to stay."

"Very well. Come." He led them squelching through the grain. The visitors soon glanced at each other in revulsion as a rotten stench hit their noses. They broke into a clear space and saw why. They were looking at a battlefield.

In every direction the grain was crushed flat in great swaths of muck, and tanks lay scattered on their sides or turned clear over, their camouflage paint burned, caterpillar tracks torn, armor plate blown open. Seven bore German markings; two were light

Russian T-26's. German corpses in green uniforms were sprawled on the ground or slumped in blown-open tanks, their purple faces bloated disgustingly. Pamela clapped a handkerchief to her face.

"This happened only day before yesterday," said the colonel. "These Fritzes were probing and got caught."

Before this, Victor Henry had seen German tanks only in Berlin, clanking down boulevards lined with red swastika flags. To see these, broken and overturned in a desolate Russian cornfield, was a jolt. He said to the colonel, "Aren't these Mark III's? How could your T-26's knock them out? They don't fire a shell that can penetrate the Mark III."

Amphiteatrov grinned. "For a seaman you know a bit about tank warfare. But ask the commander who won this battle."

Back again on the road, they arrived at what looked like an open-air machine shop for tank repairs in a village of a dozen or so thatched log cabins. Detached caterpillar tracks were stretched on the ground under the trees; wheels were off; guns were off; men hammered, filed, greased, and welded, shouting in Russian and laughing. Strolling down the street was a short hooknosed officer in an olive-colored greatcoat. When he saw the black automobile he broke into a trot. He saluted the colonel, then the two embraced. "Major Kaplan," Amphiteatrov said, "I showed our American navy friend those busted German tanks. He asked how T-26's could knock out panzer Mark III's."

The battalion commander grinned from ear to ear, clapped Victor Henry on the back, and said in Russian, "Come this way." He led them into the woods. "Here we are," he said proudly. "This is how we knocked out the Mark III's."

Dispersed in the thickets, all but invisible under branches and nets, five armored monsters thrust giant guns high in the air. Tudsbury's mouth fell open. "My God! What are these things?"

"Our newest tank, the KV," said Amphiteatrov. "It might interest President Roosevelt."

"Fantastic!" said Talky. "What do they weigh? A hundred tons?"

The Russians smiled. "It's a good tank," Amphiteatrov said.

Tudsbury asked if they might climb inside one, and to Pug's surprise the colonel agreed. Inside the command turret, despite

the clutter of machinery and instruments and the bulky gun breech, there was a lot of elbowroom. Pug thought the workmanship of the raw metal interior seemed good. The dials, valves, and controls had an old-fashioned German look.

"Great God, Henry, it's a land battleship," Tudsbury said. "Why, the best German tanks are bloody eggshells to this!"

THAT night Pug awoke from restless sleep on a straw pallet on the dirt floor of a log cabin. Beside him in blackness Tudsbury snored noisily. Groping for a cigarette and lighting it, he saw Pamela as the match flared, sitting up on the only bed. "Victor? D'you suppose if I stepped outside, a sentry would shoot me?"

"Let's try. I'll step out first. If I get shot, you go back to bed."

"Oh, that's a fine plan. Thank you." She came over and clasped hands and together they moved along the wall to the door. Across the road in the woods, soldiers were sadly singing to an accordion. Pug and Pamela sat down on a bench, huddling close in the wind.

"Dear God," Pamela said, "it's a long long way to Tipperary, isn't it? Thanks for bringing me out, Victor. I was sitting there not daring to move. I love the smell of this countryside."

Yellow flashes ran along the sky and loud thumps followed fast. Pamela winced. "Talky was a pig to drag me out here, wasn't he? Of course it suits him. He dictated two hours by candlelight tonight. Are those tanks as startling as he claims? He says that if the Soviet Union can mass-produce them, the war's as good as over."

"Well, that's journalism. We don't know how maneuverable the tank is, or how vulnerable. The Germans'll rush out a new gun that can find its weak spots. Still, it's quite a tank."

"Count on you!" Pamela laughed. "You mean that the tanks won't end the war? Do you know how I feel? Relieved! What kind of mad reaction is that?"

"Well, the war's something different, while it lasts. The expensive fireworks—the travel—"

"The interesting company," Pamela said.

"Yes, Pam. The interesting company."

The accordion was playing alone now, a plaintive tune like a lullaby, half drowned by the sighing of trees in the wind.

"Where are we heading tomorrow, Victor?"

"I'm going into the front line. You and Talky will stay in a town several miles back. Up front, one sometimes has to make a dash for it, the colonel says, and of course Talky can't do that."

"It'll be like the flight to Berlin all over again."

"No. I'll be on the ground, on friendly territory. Quite a difference—" A green sudden radiance blinded them. Pamela uttered a cry. As their pupils adjusted to the shock, they saw four smoky green lights floating very slowly down below the thickening clouds, and heard the thrum of aircraft. In the artificial glare the tiny sleeping hamlet took on the appearance of a stage set.

"You look ghastly," Pam said.

"You should see yourself. The Germans must be searching for this tank battalion."

The lights sank earthward. The airplane sounds faded away. "I used to think the Russians were nutty on camouflage, but it has its points." Pug rose stiffly. "We'd better try to sleep."

Pamela put a palm up to the black sky. "I thought I felt something." She showed Pug her hand. In the light of the last falling flare he could see, melting on her palm, a fat snowflake.

THE CAR crossed a bare plain in a steady snowfall. Pug could see no road by which the driver guided it. In about an hour, an onion-top belfry loomed ahead. They entered a town, and at the steps of the church Pug parted from the Tudsburys. A commissar in a white leather coat, with a little beard like Lenin's, came to take him off in a small British jeep.

The jeep appeared to be heading straight for the front, yet the only gunfire thumps came from the left, to the south. Pug thought the snow might be muffling the sound up ahead. He saw many freshly splintered trees and new bomb craters. The Germans had been shelling the day before, the commissar said, trying in vain to draw the fire of Russian batteries hidden in the woods.

They came to a line of crude trenches with high earthworks. These were dummy dugouts, the commissar said, deliberately made visible. They had taken much of the shellfire yesterday. The real trenches were dug along a riverbank, their log tops level with

the ground and snowed over. The commissar parked, and he and Pug crawled toward them through the brush. "The less movement the Fritzes can observe, the better," said the Russian.

Down in a deep muddy hole—a machine-gun post manned by three soldiers—Victor Henry peered through a gun slit and saw Germans. They were working across the river with earth-moving machines, pontoons, rubber boats, and trucks. They were making no effort to hide. Through binoculars handed him by a soldier, Pug could see the frost-purpled cheeks and noses of Hitler's chilled men. "You could shoot them like birds," he said in Russian.

The soldier grunted. "Yes, and give away our real position, and start them shelling us! No, thanks."

"If they ever start coming across that bridge," said the commissar, "that'll be time enough to shoot."

"That's what we're waiting for," said the soldier who seemed to be in command of this hole.

Pug said, "Can you really hold out if they get across?"

The three soldiers rolled their eyes at each other. For the first time, Victor Henry detected fear on Red Army faces. "Well," said one, "every man has his time. A Russian soldier knows how to die."

The commissar said briskly, "A soldier's duty is to live and fight, not to die. Our big guns are trained on this crossing, and when they start coming we'll blast the rats! How about it?"

"That's exactly right, Comrade Commissar."

Crawling through bushes or darting from tree to tree, Victor Henry and the commissar made their way along the thinly held line. The Germans were in view all along the river, methodically and calmly preparing to cross. "This campaign is simply a race," the commissar panted. "The Germans are pouring out their lifeblood to beat Father Frost into Moscow. But Father Frost is an old friend of Russia. You'll see, they'll never make it."

"How far are we from Moscow here?" Pug asked the commissar when they got back to the jeep.

"Far enough. I hope you saw what you wanted to see."

"I saw a lot," Victor Henry said.

The commissar appraised Pug with suspicious eyes. "It is not easy to understand the front just by looking at it."

"I understand that you need a second front."

"Then you understand the main thing. But if we must, we ourselves alone will smash this plague of German cockroaches."

By THE time they reached the central square of the town, the snow had stopped and patches of blue showed through the clouds. Tudsbury, in great spirits, called to Pug, "Hello there!"

"Where's Pamela?"

"At the church. An artillery spotter is stationed in the belfry. I couldn't climb the damned tower. She's up there making some notes. How are things at the front? Brrr! What frost, eh?"

Amphiteatrov said he was taking Tudsbury to see a downed Junkers 88 in a nearby field. Pug said he had seen plenty of Junkers 88's; he would join Pam in the church. Amphiteatrov made an annoyed face. "All right, but please remain there, Captain. We'll come back in twenty minutes or less."

Pug walked to the church on crunching, squeaking dry snow. Inside, a strong unchurchlike miasma of disinfectant filled the air; peeling frescoes of big-eyed saints looked down on bandaged soldiers who lay on straw mats. Pug went up the stone spiral staircase inside the belfry to a platform with big rusty bells. Here he caught his breath before mounting a shaky ladder.

"Victor!" Pam waved and called to him as he appeared at the top.

The onion dome was a crude job of tin sheets nailed to a curving frame. Squared around it was a brick walk and parapet, where Pamela stood in a corner out of the wind. The artillery spotter—shapeless and faceless in a long brown coat, goggles, and fastened-down thick earflaps—manned giant binoculars on a tripod, pointed west. He stepped away from them to make room for Pug. Pug put his eyes to the binoculars, and the Germans at work on the riverbank leaped into sight. Then he went to Pam's corner and surveyed the snowy vista through all points of the compass.

"Tell me about the front," Pamela said.

Still scanning the horizon, Pug described his trip. He fell suddenly silent and peered intently eastward. "Pamela, pass me those field glasses." One quick look, and Pug tapped the spotter's shoulder and pointed. Swinging the binoculars around, the spotter

started with surprise, pulled off goggles and cap, and looked again. He was only eighteen or so and had curly blond hair. Snatching up a telephone, he jiggled the hook. Gesturing anger at no answer, he pulled on his cap and went quickly down the ladder.

"What is it?" Pamela said. "Let me look." Through the big eye-pieces of the spotter's instrument she saw a column of machines coming out of the woods. "Tanks?"

"Some are armored personnel cars. It's a tank unit, but it's not Russian."

"But that's the direction we came from." They looked each other in the eyes. Her red-cheeked face showed fear. "Shouldn't we get down out of here and find Amphiteatrov?"

Pug stared eastward. To the naked eye the armored column was like a tiny black worm five or six miles away. He felt a flash of anger at Tudsbury for dragging his daughter here. Of course, nobody had planned on being surprised in the rear by Germans; but there they were! If worse came to worst, he felt he could handle himself with the Germans. But the Tudsburies were enemies.

"I'll tell you, Pam," he said, "the colonel knows where we are now. Let's stick here for a while."

"All right. How did the Germans get around back there?"

"They must have broken across the river to the south and hooked through the woods. It's not a large unit, it's a probe."

The spotter came back, made some observations which he marked on a grid map, then barked numbers into the telephone. Animated and cheery now, he grinned at the visitors. "Our batteries are training on them. Maybe you'll see something yet."

Victor Henry said, "They're watching across the river for your batteries to fire."

"But we can't let those bastards take the town from the rear."

"I hear airplanes." Pug turned westward. "*Samolyoty!*"

"*Dal!*" Swiveling and tilting the binoculars upward, the spotter began to shout into the phone.

"Airplanes too?" Pamela's voice trembled.

"That's the German drill, tanks and planes together."

The oncoming planes, three Stukas, were growing bigger in Pug's glasses. The spotter switched his binoculars to the tank unit

again and cheered. Pug looked in that direction. "Holy cow! Now I call this military observing, Pam." Tanks in another column were coming out of the woods about halfway between the Germans and the town, moving at right angles to the panzer track. He handed her the glasses and squinted at the airplanes.

"Oh! Oh!" Pamela exclaimed. "Ours?"

"*Dal!*" cried the spotter, grinning at her. "*Nashi!*"

A hand struck her shoulder and knocked her to her hands and knees. "They're starting their dive," Pug said. "Crawl up close to the dome and lie still." He was on his knees beside her. The planes tilted over and dived. When they were not much higher than the belfry, bombs fell out of them. The planes zoomed by, and all around the church the bombs began exploding. The belfry shook. Flame, dirt, and smoke roared up beyond the parapet. Pug watched the three ungainly machines almost collide as they climbed and turned to dive again. Either the Luftwaffe had lost most of its veteran pilots or they were not flying on this front. Antiaircraft guns were starting to pop now.

Pamela, crouched against the dome, gripped his hand.

"Just lie low, this will be over soon." As Pug said this, he saw one plane dive for the belfry. The tin dome sang to striking bullets. Pug pushed Pamela flat and threw himself on top of her. Watching over his shoulder, he saw the pilot, a young fellow with a toothy grin. He thought the youngster was going to crash into the dome, and as he winced, he felt something rip at his left shoulder. The airplane scream diminished. The rattling of bullets stopped.

Pug stood, feeling his shoulder. His sleeve was torn open at the top, but there was no wound. Bombs were exploding below; the other two planes were still whistling over the town; one was smoking badly. The spotter was lying on the bricks beside the overturned binoculars. Blood was pooling under his head, and with horror Pug saw the white broken bone of the skull.

Picking up the telephone, Pug jiggled the hook till somebody answered. He shouted in Russian, "I am the American visitor up here. The spotter has been killed."

He saw the smoking plane try to climb, then burst into flames and fall. "All right," said the voice, "somebody will come."

Pamela had crawled beside the spotter and was looking at the dead face. "Oh, my God, my God," she sobbed, head in hand.

Smoke rose from fires in the town, smelling of burning hay. Pug righted the binoculars. To the east, the two tank-unit tracks had almost joined in a black V. He could see that five of the KV monsters bulged among lighter Russian tanks. Several German tanks were on fire; the rest seemed to be heading back to the woods. Pug saw only one light Russian tank giving off black smoke. But even as he watched, a KV burst into violent, purple-orange flame.

"The Russians are winning out there," Pug said.

Pamela was staring at him with blank shocked eyes. Her hand went to the rip at his shoulder. "Dearest, are you hurt?"

"No. Not at all. It didn't touch me."

"Thank God! Thank God!"

The ladder jumped and rapped, and Amphiteatrov's face, excited and red, showed at the top. "Well, you're all right. Well, I'm glad. That was best to stay here. Many people killed in the town." His eye fell on the body lying in blood. "Agh!"

"We were strafed," Pug said. "He's dead."

The colonel shook his head and said, "Well, come quickly."

They followed him down the ladder and the stairs and emerged outside the church. Through the open door of the black automobile Tudsbury waved at them. "Hello! There's a monstrous tank battle going on, an utter inferno. Hello, you've torn your coat!"

"Yes, I know." Though drained of spirit, Pug was able to smile at the gap between journalism and war. The reality of the two small groups of tanks banging away out there seemed so small-scale compared with Tudsbury's description. "We had a view of it," Pug said. They got in the back and Pamela closed her eyes.

"Did you? Well, Pam ought to be a help on this story! I say, Pam, you're all right, aren't you?"

"I'm splendid, Talky, thank you."

Amphiteatrov slammed the car door. "Make yourselves comfortable, please. We are going to drive straight back to Moscow."

"Oh no!" Tudsbury's fat face wrinkled up like an infant's. "I want to interview the tank crews."

Amphiteatrov turned and faced them. "There has been a big

breakthrough in the north. Moscow is in danger. All foreign missions will be evacuated to the Caucasus. We must hurry."

Under the blanket stretched across the passengers' legs, Pamela's hand groped to Pug's. She pulled off her glove, twined her cold fingers in his, and pressed her face against the torn shoulder of his bridge coat. His hand tightened on hers.

39

LESLIE Slote heard footfalls in the dark as he sat in an overcoat and fur hat, working by a kerosene lamp. He looked up from his desk in the embassy and saw the navy cap and white scarf before he could make out the face. "Captain Henry, why didn't they take you to the station? You've got to get out of Moscow tonight!"

"I've been to the station. The train to Kuibyshev had left. The air raid held us up outside the city." Pug brushed snow from his shoulder. "Do you know there's no sentry at the door?"

"That's terrible," Slote said. "We're supposed to be guarded night and day, by a soldier assigned by the Narkomindel." He looked at his watch in agitation. "It's getting near the end when soldiers leave their posts." He laughed gaily. "Please sit down." Pug sat without opening his coat. It was almost as cold here as in the snowstorm outside. "I was at the Kazan station this evening," Slote went on, "seeing off the staff. That was a spectacle! One bomb hit would have wiped out nine-tenths of the foreign diplomats in Russia—and a healthy chunk of the Soviet bureaucracy too."

"Have all the typewriters been stowed?" Pug asked. "I have to write a report."

"You'll find one in Colonel Yeaton's office. I volunteered to keep things going here until the chargé gets organized in Kuibyshev. To redeem myself after Warsaw—I'm not proud of the job I did there." Slote jumped at a muffled sound. "Was that a bomb? Captain, it's my responsibility to see that you leave—"

Pug held up a hand. "The Nark's making arrangements for stragglers like me. I have to check back at eleven in the morning."

"Oh! Well, that's that." Slote laughed again. "A pouch has come in from Stockholm. There was stuff from Rome." He pulled a snap-

shot from an envelope. "Your new grandson. He's quite handsome."

Victor Henry read the writing on the back of the snapshot—"For old Slote—Louis Henry, aged 11 days, with circus fat lady"—then contemplated the picture. A plump, hollow-eyed Natalie held a baby that looked startlingly like Byron as an infant—the large, serious eyes, the comically determined look. Pug cleared his choked-up throat. "Not bad. Natalie's right, she's gotten fat."

"Too much bed rest, she says. I'll bet the baby will be as clever as he is handsome." Pug sat staring at the snapshot. Slote added, "Would you care to keep that? I have a better picture of Natalie."

Victor Henry tried to express in an awkward smile the gratitude for which he could find no words.

"Are the Tudsburys stuck here too?" Slote asked.

"I left Talky trying to wangle them a ride to Archangel. The Russians are flying out some RAF pilot instructors. I'm sure they'll get on that plane. Which is why I must get at this report. I want to give him a copy to forward via London."

"Let me have a copy too, won't you? And another to go in the next pouch. *If* there is one." Slote blew his nose. "My God, this stink of burning paper brings back Warsaw! And there's still a ton that I've somehow got to get burned in the morning."

"All Moscow stinks of it," Pug said. "The city's one unholy mess. Have you seen all the barbed wire and tangled steel girders blocking the bridges? And the traffic jams, more cars than I knew were in the Soviet Union, all heading east with headlights blazing, blackout be damned! With those blue AA searchlights still swinging overhead, I tell you it's a real end-of-the-world feeling."

Slote chuckled. "A covey of government big shots left yesterday in a line of honking black limousines. I'm sure that triggered this panic. However, Stalin's staying, and that takes courage, because Hitler'll hang him like a dog in Red Square. And drag Lenin out of the tomb too, and string him up alongside. There'll be stirring things to record here, for whoever survives to tell it."

VICTOR Henry groped to the military attaché's office. There he struck matches and lit two kerosene lamps. In their bleak glow he surveyed the office and found a typewriter, paper, and carbons. His

fingers were cold and stiff, and the keys clicked slowly as he started his report with an account of Moscow under siege. He described the air raid he had witnessed that evening, and the impressive display of antiaircraft fire which the Russians put up against Luftwaffe attacks. Then he turned to the mass exodus from the city. "I believe this panic is premature," he wrote; "that Moscow has a fair chance of holding, and even if it falls, the war may not end. My outstanding impression is that the Russians are not beaten."

The typewriter was clicking faster now. It was almost one o'clock. Pug still had to return to the hotel and pack. He ate some Russian chocolate for energy and was banging out the tale of his journey when Slote came in and dropped a sealed envelope on his desk. "This was in the pouch for you. Care for some coffee?"

"You bet. Thanks." Pug sat up, stretched, and stamped his feet before he broke the seal of the envelope. There were two letters inside, one from the White House and one from the Bureau of Personnel. He opened the one from the White House first; a few sentences in Harry Hopkins' dashed-off slanting hand:

My dear Pug—

I want to congratulate you on your new assignment, and to convey the Boss's good wishes. He is very preoccupied with the Japanese, who are beginning to get ugly, and of course we are all watching the Russian struggle with anxiety. I still think—and pray—they'll hold. I hope my letter reached Stalin. He's a land crab, and he's got to be convinced that the Channel crossing is a major task, otherwise bad faith accusations will start to fly, to Hitler's delight. There's been an unfortunate upturn in submarine sinkings in the Atlantic, and the Germans are cutting loose in Africa, too. All in all the good cause seems to be heading into the storm. You'll be missed in the gray fraternity of office boys.

Harry H.

The other envelope contained a navy mailgram from the chief of personnel: DETACHED ONE NOVEMBER PRESENT DUTY X PROCEED FASTEST AVAILABLE TRANSPORTATION PEARL HARBOR X REPORT CALIFORNIA (BB 44) RELIEVE CO X SUBMIT VOUCHERS OF TRAVEL EXPENSES COMBAT FOR PEARL.

In bald, trite navy jargon on a flimsy yellow sheet, here was command of a battleship—and what a battleship! The *California*, the old Prune Barge, a ship in which he had served as ensign and as lieutenant commander, which he knew well and loved; launched in 1919, and completely modernized.

Captain of the *California*! Evidently Admiral King's staff was a trap he had escaped. In his class only Robinson and Brown had battleships, and Munson had the *Saratoga*. His strange "gray office boy" service to the President had proved a shortcut after all. Flag rank was suddenly, brightly back in sight.

He thought of Rhoda, because she had sweated out with him the twenty-seven-year wait; and of Pamela, because he wanted to share his excitement right now. But they had parted at the railroad station with a strong handclasp, while Talky was pleading his case with the RAF pilots. He might not see her again.

Leslie Slote came back with coffee. "Anything good?"

"New orders. Command of the *California*. A battleship."

"A battleship? I should think you'd find it—well, routine, after what you've been doing. Not many naval officers—in fact not many Americans—have talked to Stalin face-to-face."

"Leslie, I'm not entirely unhappy with these orders."

"Oh! Well, then, I gather congratulations are in order. I'll leave you to finish that report."

When Slote had gone, Victor Henry sat drinking coffee, meditating on the little yellow paper, the sudden irreversible verdict on his life. He could ask for no better judgment. This was the blue ribbon, the A plus, the gold medal of naval service. Yet there was a shadow on the marvelous news. At War Plans, he had been waging a vigilant fight for the landing craft program. "Pug's girl friend Elsie" was no joke. With Pug gone, "Elsie" was going to lose ground. One day the crunch would come and there would be a frantic scramble to get landing craft made. Conceivably a landing operation would fail, with bad loss of life. But it was absurd, Pug thought, to feel the weight of the war on his shoulders. Sooner or later the United States would produce enough landing craft to beat Hitler. Meantime he had to go to his battleship.

Taking a lamp to a globe in the corner, he marked off the distance

from Moscow to Pearl Harbor. It was about the same to travel west or east; halfway around the earth. Westward lay the faster transportation, but unfortunately the war now made much of Europe impassable, and the few routes still open were chancy. Eastward were slow, uncertain Russian trains and occasional, even more uncertain Russian planes. But the way was peaceful and Kuibyshev was five hundred miles nearer Pearl Harbor. Yes, he thought, he had better start arranging with the Russians. . . .

"You look like a mad conqueror," he suddenly heard Slote say. "Gloating over the globe by lamplight. All you need is the little black mustache." The Foreign Service officer leaned in the doorway. "We have a visitor out here."

By Slote's desk, a Russian soldier stood slapping snow from his long khaki coat. He took off his cap, and Pug was startled to recognize Jochanan Jastrow. He explained that in order to get warm clothes and some legal papers, he had passed himself off as a soldier from a routed unit. The Moscow authorities were collecting such stragglers and forming them into emergency work battalions. "After a while maybe there will be a change for the better in the war, and I can find my family," Berel said.

"Where are they?" Pug asked.

"With the partisans, near Smolensk. I have passed through the German lines once. I can do it again." He turned to Slote. "I heard all the foreigners are leaving Moscow. I wanted to find out what happened to the documents I gave you."

The Foreign Service officer and Victor Henry looked at each other, embarrassed. "Well, I showed them to an important American newspaperman," Slote said. "He sent a long story to the United States, but I'm afraid it ended up in the back pages. You see, there have been so many stories of German atrocities!"

"Forgive me, sir, but why did you not give those documents to your ambassador to send to President Roosevelt?"

"I did bring them to his attention. I'm sorry, but our intelligence people questioned their authenticity."

"But that is incredible! I can bring you ten people tomorrow who will give affidavits to such stories. Some of them—"

In exasperation, Slote broke in. "Look here, my dear chap, I'm

one man almost alone now"—he gestured at his piled-up desk—"responsible for all my country's affairs in Moscow. I did my best. Your story is ghastly, and I myself unhappily believe it, but it's only a small part of this hideous war. Moscow may fall in the next seventy-two hours, and that's my main business now. I'm sorry."

Jastrow answered the outburst in a quiet, dogged tone. "But President Roosevelt is the only man in the world who could stop this crazy slaughter of innocent people." He turned to Victor Henry. "Is there not some way, Captain, to tell him the story?"

Pug was already picturing himself writing a letter to the President. He had seen several stories like Jastrow's in print, and some even more gruesome official reports about German slaughter of Russian villagers. Therefore such a letter would be nagging the President about things he suspected or knew, as well as being both futile and unprofessional. It would be the sort of impertinence Byron had offered at the President's table; but Byron had been a youngster concerned about his wife, while he, Victor Henry . . . He answered Jastrow by turning his hands upward.

Jastrow nodded. "Naturally, it is outside your province. Have you news of Natalie? Have she and Aaron gone home yet?"

Pug pulled the snapshot from his pocket. "This was taken several weeks ago. I expect they're out by now."

Jastrow's face became warm and gentle. "Why, it is a small Byron. God bless him and keep him safe from harm." He handed back the photograph. "Well, you gentlemen have been gracious to me. My documents are true, and I pray to God somebody soon finds a way to get them to President Roosevelt so that he can rescue the Jews out of the Germans' claws."

WHEN his alarm clock woke him after an hour or two of exhausted slumber, Pug scarcely remembered writing the letter which lay on the table by his bed; he had scrawled it on two sheets of Hotel National paper when he got back from typing his report at the embassy. As he reread it now, it struck him forcibly as an ill-considered communication for which the place was the wastebasket. In effect, he was advising the President to go over the heads of everybody in the State Department, including his own

ambassador in the Soviet Union, to demand a look at the Minsk documents.

Pug threw the letter face down on the table as a heavy rapping came at the door. Alistair Tudsbury, enormous in fur hat and coat, entered and sat down. "Thank God you're here, old friend. Sorry to crash in on you like this, but—I say, are you all right?"

Pug was rubbing his face hard with both hands. "I was up all night writing a report. What's doing?"

The correspondent's bulging eyes probed at him. "This is going to be difficult, but here it is straight. Are you and Pamela lovers?"

"What!" Pug was too startled, and too tired, to be either angry or amused. "Why, no! Of course not."

"Well, funnily enough, I didn't think so. That makes it all the more baffling. Pamela has just told me flatly that she's not going to London unless you are! If you're off to Kuibyshev, she means to tag along and work for the British embassy or something. This is wild nonsense, but there's no reasoning with her. Those RAF fellows are flying off at noon, and they've got space for both of us."

"Where is she now?"

"Out for a stroll in Red Square, of all things! Won't even pack. Hell, Victor, it's embarrassing, her trailing after you, a happily married man. And what about Ted Gallard? Why, she scribbled a letter to me to give him telling him it was all off!"

Victor Henry said in weary tones, yet with a glad surge at heart, "Well, take my word for it, I'm utterly amazed."

"I was sure you would be. I've told her till I'm blue in the face that you're a straitlaced old-fashioned man, the soul of honor and all that sort of thing. She simply says that's why she likes you! Victor, surely it's dangerous for a British girl to rattle around in Moscow, with the Huns closing in on all sides."

"Yes, it is." Victor Henry stumbled to the yellowed mirror and rubbed his bristly chin. "I'd better talk to Pamela."

"Please, dear fellow, please. And hurry!"

Pug went out to fresh snow, bright sunshine, and a burst of Russian song by male voices. A formation of old men and boys, shouldering picks and shovels and lustily shouting a marching tune, was following an army sergeant down Manezhnaya Square.

Red Square was almost deserted. In front of the Lenin tomb outside the Kremlin wall two soldiers stood as usual like statues, but there was no line of visitors. Far on the other side, Victor Henry saw a small figure in gray walking past Saint Basil's Cathedral with the swingy gait he remembered from the *Bremen* deck. He headed toward her, his overshoes sinking deep in snow. She saw him and waved. Hurrying to meet him across the snow, she threw herself in his arms and kissed him, as she had on his return from the flight to Berlin. "Damn! Talky went and told you."

"That's right."

"Are you exhausted? I know you were up all night. What are your plans? Are you set for Kuibyshev? Or will you go to London?"

"Neither. I've gotten orders, Pam. I'm going to command a battleship, the *California*."

She faced him, her eyes glistening. "Command a *battleship*!"

"Not bad, eh?" he said like a schoolboy.

"My God, smashing! You're bound to be an admiral after that, aren't you? Oh, how happy your wife will be!" Pamela said this with unselfconscious pleasure. "I wish we had a bottle of that sticky Georgian champagne right now. Where's the *California* based?"

"Pearl Harbor. The Hawaiian Islands."

"Oh. Hawaii. All right. We'll start plotting to get me to Hawaii. No doubt there's a British consulate there, or something."

"Aren't you on leave from the air force? Won't you have to go back on duty if Talky returns to London?"

"My love, let me take care of all that. I'm very good at getting what I want. When do you leave, and how?"

"As soon as I can, via Siberia and the Philippines." He clasped both her hands. "Now, Pam, listen. You mentioned my wife. She'll probably come to Pearl. What have you in mind, exactly?"

"Why, love, since you asked me, to deceive her, decently, carefully, kindly, until you're tired of me and I go home."

This blunt declaration shook Victor Henry. It was so novel, so outside the set rules of his existence, that he replied with clumsy stiffness, "I don't understand that kind of arrangement."

"I know, darling. You're a dear nice man. Nevertheless I don't know what else to propose. I love you. That is unchangeable. I'm

happy with you, and not happy otherwise. I *don't* propose to be separated from you anymore until you dismiss me."

He brushed snow off a bench outside Saint Basil's Cathedral and sat her down. "We're in sort of a time bind here," he said. "For the moment I'll put Rhoda aside and just talk about you—"

She interrupted him. "Victor, love, I know you're faithful to your wife. I've always feared you'd think me a pushing slut. But what else can I do? The time has come, that's all. Ever since I was forced to tell Talky this morning, I've been flooded with joy."

Pug sat forward, his eyes half closed in the sun glare off the snow, looking at her. Soldiers began piling out of a long line of trucks that had just pulled into Red Square. Obviously new recruits, they were lined up in ragged ranks by barking sergeants. Pug said, "I know this kind of chance won't roll around again in my life."

"It won't, Victor. It won't!" Her face shone with excitement. "It's a mischance that you can't marry me, but we must accept that and go on from there."

"I didn't say I can't marry you," Pug said. She looked astounded. "If I love you enough to have an affair with you behind my wife's back, then I love you enough to ask her for a divorce. There's a name for the decent, kindly deception you talked about, and I don't like it. But all this is breaking too fast, Pam, and meantime you have to leave Moscow. The only place for you to go is London."

"I won't marry Ted. Don't argue," she said, as he started to talk. "I know it's a beastly decision, but that's it. Your battleship is thrilling and grand, though it complicates things. You can't take me along across Siberia, but you had better forbid me now, or I'll get to Hawaii myself—sooner than you'd believe possible."

"How about your being needed in England?"

"If I leave old England in the lurch, Victor, it will be because something stronger calls me, and I'll do it."

This was direct language that Victor Henry understood. All at once he felt a pulse of hope that there might conceivably be a new life in store for him with this young woman. "Okay. Then let's get down to realities," he said gently, glancing at his watch. "You've got to move in a couple of hours. I do too."

Pamela smiled beautifully. "What a nuisance I must be, sud-

denly draping myself around your neck at this moment of your life. Do you really love me?"

"Yes, I love you," Pug said sincerely.

Pamela heaved a sigh. "All right. So where to today, then?"

"Back with Talky to London. I'll write or cable you."

"When?"

"When I can. When I know."

"Well, that will be a communication to look forward to." Pamela put a hand to his face and smiled at him, her eyes full of naked love.

"Okay. Then I must get cracking. Oh dear, I leave you again."

They rose and began walking arm in arm. Among the recruits they walked past stood Berel Jastrow. He saw Victor Henry, and for a moment put his right hand over his heart. The naval officer raised his cap as though to wipe his brow, and put it back on.

IN THE unlit hallway outside her suite, Pamela unbuttoned her coat, then unbuttoned Pug's and pressed herself hard to him, and they embraced and kissed. She whispered, "Oh God, how I love you! Will you drive with us to the airport? Will you come in while I pack? Will you stay with me every second to the last?"

"Yes, of course I'll stay with you."

She dashed tears from her face with the back of her hand. "Oh, how glad I am that I dug in my nasty little hooves!"

"What's the verdict?" Tudsbury said, as she opened the door.

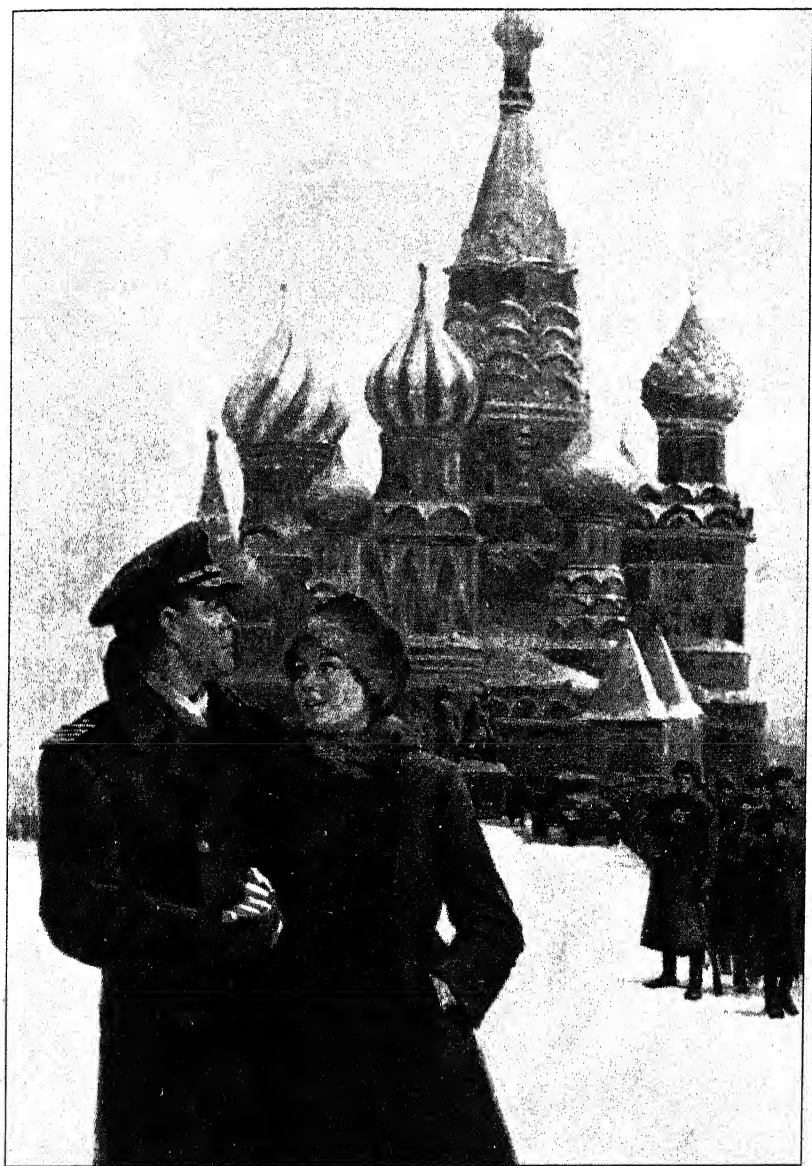
"I was being silly. I'm going home with you."

"Gad, what a relief! I was about to come looking for you. The RAF lads are being flown out half an hour earlier. There's a rumor that the airport may be under shellfire soon."

"I can pack in ten minutes." Pamela strode toward her room, adding to Pug, "Come with me, love."

Victor Henry saw Tudsbury's eyebrows go up. Pamela was human, Pug thought, for all her strength. She couldn't resist exploding the possessive endearment in her father's face. He said, "Wait. I must get a report from my room. I'll be right back."

He returned shortly, out of breath from the run, and handed a stapled envelope to Tudsbury. "Give this to Captain Kyser, the naval attaché at our embassy, hand to hand. All right?"



"Top secret?" Tudsbury asked with relish.

"Well—be careful with it. It's for the next Washington pouch."

"When I travel, this case never leaves my hand," Tudsbury said. He slipped into a briefcase Pug's envelope, which contained two others. One was the report for Harry Hopkins. The other was the letter to the President about the Jews of Minsk.

40

AMID a crowd of officers from both services, Pug sat on the back lawn of the Army and Navy Club in Manila. It was three o'clock in the morning by their time, and they were listening to a broadcast of the Army-Navy football game from Philadelphia.

The old smells of Army-Navy night in Manila, the old inter-service jokes and insults, all pulled him back in spirit. Life here was amazingly unchanged. The jumpy, overwrought embassy people in Tokyo had been speculating that there might be no Army-Navy game; that either the Japanese would have gone to war by Thanksgiving, or the American armed forces would be on full alert. Yet there was the same scoreboard; and there were the mascots—Army mule in a brown blanket, Navy goat in a blue one—tethered and waiting for the comic moments. Only floodlights blazing across the bay at the Cavite Navy Yard for all-night repair work suggested that it was late November, 1941, and that the navy was slightly bestirring itself for an emergency.

"Pug! I heard you were here." A hand lightly struck his shoulder. His classmate Walter Tully smiled down at him; Tully had left the submarine school in New London to take command of the undersea squadron at Manila. He gestured at a crowded table near the scoreboard. "Come and sit with us."

"Maybe at the half, Red. It's more like the old days, sitting on the grass."

"You're dead right. Well, I'll join you." The board showed an Army touchdown. Tully shook his head. "We're going to lose this one, old buddy. We could use Pug Henry in there."

"Hal! Fifteen-yard penalty for illegal use of wheelchairs. Say, Red, what's the idea, sending the *Devilfish* out on exercises the

night of the game? Do you think there's a war on or something?"

Tully grinned. "That was Branch Hoban's idea. It's going alongside for two weeks starting today—it's due in at noon—and he wanted to get in some drills. You'll see plenty of Byron."

"I'll only be here till the Clipper leaves."

"Yes. It's great you've got the *California*, Pug."

After some dull skirmishing, Navy made a touchdown and the half ended. Pug and Tully got to their feet and joined in the Navy yells while an ensign happily paraded the goat around. Cheerily, Red Tully ordered drinks. "Tell me about Rooshia, Pug."

His happy grin faded as Victor Henry described the panic in Moscow. He shook his head. "And here we sit, fat, dumb, and happy. You came through Tokyo. What's the dope, Pug? Are the Japs really going to fight? We're getting some scary alerts here."

"Well, our people in Tokyo are worried. The ambassador talked at length about Japanese psychology. They're capable of executing a suicidal plan suddenly, and he fears they will."

Tully dropped his voice. "Admiral Hart had a straight war warning today, Pug. In July, when they landed in Indochina, and then in August, when Roosevelt shut off their oil, we all thought, Here goes! We ran dawn and dusk general quarters till it got kind of silly. Now I'm wondering if I should start that up again. If they do go, we're in trouble. The submarine force is short of everything—torpedoes, spare parts, watch officers. Speaking of which—your son Byron has more damn brass! He walked into my office the other day and asked for a transfer to the Atlantic command. Going over the head of his own skipper. I sure ate him out about it."

Victor Henry said with forced calm, "His wife and baby are in Italy. He's worried about them."

"We're all separated from our kinfolk, Pug. I'd do anything within reason for a son of yours, but—"

"Don't put it that way. Byron's just another officer."

"Okay. I'm glad you said that."

"Still, his family problem is serious." A crowd roared from the speakers, and Pug said with relief, "Okay! Second half."

When the game ended, many people were stretched out asleep on the grass under a dawn sky. Some navy officers were bawling

"Anchors Aweigh," for their team had won. Pug declined Tully's invitation to breakfast and went up to his room.

Pug was not sleepy. He opened the windows and sat watching the day brighten over the broad blue harbor. He sat so for more than an hour, seeing pictures. Of himself and Byron under a poinciana tree at the white house on Harrison Boulevard, working on French verbs; the boy's thin face wrinkling, silent tears falling at his father's roared exasperation. Of Warren at high school, winning a history medal, an English medal, and a baseball award. Of Madeline wearing a gold paper crown at her eighth-birthday party. Of Rhoda crabbing about the heat and the boredom, getting drunk in this club at the Christmas dance.

Pictures, then, of Pamela in Red Square. Of the dreary mud streets of Kuibyshev while he waited for train tickets; of Siberia on the two-week rail ride; the beautiful Siberian girls selling fruits, flat circular bread, sausage, and hot chickpeas at tiny wooden stations; the awesome three-day forest stretches; the ugly miles on miles of huts in Tokyo; the Japanese war-weariness and poverty; the letters to Pam he had drafted and torn up.

Through all these pictures Victor Henry had preserved a happy sense that he was moving toward a new life, a fulfilled life now within grasp if he'd divorce Rhoda. But that would be cruel and shocking; she had been giving him an arid, half-empty existence, but she had been doing her best. Yet the decision evidently lay between being kind to Rhoda and seizing this new life.

He had written the letters to Pamela to get the problem on paper for a clear look at it. By the time he arrived in Tokyo, he had decided that instead of a letter he had to send a cable—either "Come," or "Don't come." And he had concluded that Pamela was wiser than he; that they should indeed test out their passion before wounding Rhoda. He had been on the point of cabling "Come," but he had not. He could not imagine himself conducting a hole-in-corner affair, even if with Pamela it did not seem immoral.

In Manila an awareness of his wife began to overtake him, and the reality of Pamela to fade away. Manila was saturated with Rhoda, good and bad memories alike, and with his own hardened identity. Above all, it recalled to Pug the pleasure he had taken in

his children. Those days he looked back on as the sweetest in his life. To start all over again with Pamela would be a resurrection. But could a rigid, crusty man like himself do it?

Sleep at last overtook him in the armchair. But his inner clock, which seldom failed, snapped him awake in time to drive out to Cavite and watch the *Devilfish* arrive.

BYRON was standing on the forecastle, but Pug failed to recognize him. As the *Devilfish* nosed alongside the pier, Byron sang out, "Holy smoke, it's my father, Dad! Dad!" Then Pug perceived that the slim figure with both hands in back pockets had a familiar stance, and that his son's voice was issuing from the curly red beard. Byron leaped to the dock while the vessel was still warping in, threw his arms around Pug, and hugged him.

"Hi, Briny. Why the foliage?"

"Captain Hoban can't stand beards. I plan to grow one to my knees. Gosh, this is a surprise!" From the bridge an officer shouted impatiently through a megaphone. Jumping back on the forecastle, Byron called, "I'll spend the day with you, Dad. Hey, Mom says you're going to command the *Californial*! That's fabulous!"

The *Devilfish* officers warmly invited Victor Henry to lunch at a house they had rented in the suburbs. Pug caught a look from Byron and declined. "I live aboard the submarine," Byron said, as they drove in to Manila. "I'm not in that setup."

"Why not? Sounds like a good thing."

"Oh, neat. Cook, butler, two houseboys, five acres, a swimming pool, and all for peanuts. I've been there for dinner. They have these girls come in, you know, and whoop it up and all that."

"Well? Fine deal for the young, I should think."

"What did you do, Dad, when you were away from Mom?"

Pug glanced at Byron. "I did a lot of agonized looking, Briny, I'll admit. But don't act holier than thou, whatever you do."

"I don't feel holier than thou. My wife's in Italy. That's that. They can do as they please."

"What's the latest word on her?"

"She's flying to Lisbon on the fifteenth. I've got a picture of the kid. It's incredible how much he looks like my baby pictures!"

Pug decided not to mention the snapshot in his wallet.

"It's hell, being this far apart," Byron said. "Can you picture it, Dad? No telephone, a letter only now and then getting through by luck? She almost got out once through Switzerland, but she panicked at taking a German plane. The goddamned Germans!" After a silence he said self-consciously, "Hot here, isn't it? I guess it was pretty cold in Russia."

"It's freezing in Tokyo, too," Pug said, glad of a distracting subject. "Say, let's look at the old house before we have lunch."

Byron's smile, framed in the red beard, was still charming. "Sure. I never have, for some reason." Then, as they drove along Harrison Boulevard, he exclaimed, "Someone painted it yellow!"

Pug parked and they got out. It surprised him too to find the house no longer white. "The trees are much taller," Byron said, "yet the house seems to have shrunk. Here's where Warren threw the can of red paint at me. There's still a mark on the sidewalk. Under that tree is where we used to sit when you'd tutor me."

"I wouldn't think that's a pleasant memory. I was a lousy tutor. For all the times I lost my temper, I apologize."

Byron gave his father a peculiar glance through half-closed eyes. "When you put on that angry voice, it did scare me. But it was all right. I liked studying with you. I understood you."

They looked without talking for a couple of long minutes. "Well," Pug said, "lunch?"

"You know something?" Byron's gaze was still on the house. "Except for the days I had in Lisbon with Natalie, I was happier here than I've ever been in my life, before or since. I loved this house."

"The worst of a service career," Pug said, "is that you raise a family of tumbleweeds."

Over lunch at the Army and Navy Club, Pug decided to probe Byron a bit about Berel Jastrow and about Pamela, for Natalie had mentioned in the Rome airport that she'd known Pam in Paris. He described Jastrow's sudden arrival with the documents in Moscow, and his spectral reappearance in army uniform. Byron exploded in anger when his father mentioned Tudsbury's suspicion that Jastrow might be an NKVD emissary. "Nobody can know Berel for five minutes without realizing that he's on the level."

"I wasn't that sure. But I wrote to the President about it."

Byron stared openmouthed. "You did *what*, Dad?"

"Well, those documents got shunted aside as probable fakes. I thought they deserved investigation."

Byron Henry's face was glowing. "All I can say is, well done."

"No. A futile gesture is never well done. But I did it. Incidentally, the Tudsburies and I traveled to the front together. Pamela struck me as an unusually brave and agreeable sort."

"Oh, Pam Tudsbury's the original endurer, from what Natalie says. They're not too unlike in that way, but otherwise they sure are. Natalie said she raised Cain all over gay Paree with a character who used to room with Leslie Slote. Then they broke up and she went into a bad spin."

Pug could not help persisting. "How—a spin?"

"Oh, you know, sleeping around, trying to drink up all the wine in Paris, and driving like a maniac. She wrapped a car around a tree—What's the matter? You look upset."

"It's an upsetting story. She seems a fine girl—I'll be here a week," Pug said abruptly. "Can we get in some tennis?"

THEY played early in the mornings to dodge the heat, and then breakfasted together. Pug wanted to reopen the subject of Pamela, but he couldn't do it. A romance between his staid father and Pamela Tudsbury would strike Byron as a middle-aged aberration.

One day Branch Hoban prevailed upon Pug to come to the house in the suburbs for lunch. Before he left, over rum drinks on the terrace, Hoban and Aster talked reassuringly about Byron. They both considered him a natural submarine man; only the military bone, they said, seemed to be missing in him. Transfer to the Atlantic was his obsession, but Hoban tolerantly pointed out that it was impossible. The squadron was far under complement now. Byron had to make up his mind that the *Devilfish* was his ship.

Pug brought up this topic at the time of day when Byron was usually in the highest spirits, at early coffee on the lawn after their game and shower. Casually, he remarked, "Natalie's flying to Lisbon on the fifteenth, you said? Think she'll make it this time?"

"She'd better! They've got highest priority."

"Well, that isn't very far off. This transfer request of yours—" Pug hesitated. "Isn't it something you can table until then?"

"Listen, Dad, I'm *assuming* she'll get home. Otherwise I'd probably desert and go fetch her out. But I still want to be transferred. I've never seen my own son. I've spent the sum total of two days with my wife since we got married."

"There's another side to it. Your squadron is desperate for watch officers, we're in a war alert, and—"

Byron broke in. "What is this, Dad? I haven't asked you to use your influence with Tully, have I?"

"I'm sure glad you haven't. Red Tully can't do the impossible. He stretched a point taking you into that May class, Byron, but—"

"Sure, I'm eternally grateful. That's why I'm separated from my wife and son by the whole wide earth."

"Maybe we'd better drop it," said Victor Henry.

"That's a fine idea, Dad."

Pug felt he had lost all the ground he had been gaining with his son. Yet Byron could not have been more amiable when he saw him off on the Clipper next day. He threw his arms around his father, and impulsively Pug said, "Will Natalie like the shrubbery?"

It was a pleasure to hear Byron laugh. "Don't worry. The day I leave the *Devilfish*, off it comes."

"Well—I guess this is it, Byron."

"The tumbleweeds blowing apart," Byron said. "But you'll be seeing Warren and Janice, anyhow. Give them my love."

As the loudspeaker called for passengers to board the huge flying boat, Victor Henry looked in his son's eyes. He said with great difficulty, "Look, I pray for Natalie and your boy."

Byron's eyes were steady. "I'm sure you do, Dad. Thanks." And when the Clipper wheeled away for the long takeoff the son still stood there, hands thrust in his back pockets, watching.

THE Japanese fleet at that moment was on its way to Hawaii.

The Kuril Islands, a seven-hundred-mile chain between Japan and Siberia, had made a good secret rendezvous. Japan's six aircraft carriers had met there first in a setting of snow-patched crags. Their fliers had practiced shallow torpedo runs while the rest of the

armada gathered. When the force set out eastward, only a few of Japan's leaders knew where they were going, and why.

They were not sure the attack would go. The fleet was sailing in case the Washington talks broke down. The Japanese peace plan called for the United States to resume sending oil and scrap iron, and to recognize Japan's right to rule East Asia and China. If the Americans did not grant this, an enormous simultaneous assault would burst out of Japan like red rays all over the South Pacific, it's timing locked on to one irrevocably appointed hour: the time for a surprise air strike against Hawaii.

The three strong points held by the western powers in the South Pacific were Pearl Harbor, Manila, and Singapore. The plan was to knock out United States air and sea power at Pearl Harbor from the air; to capture Singapore by seaborne assault; to land troops in the Philippines and take Manila, and then to sweep up the chips in the East Indies; and thereafter to use these new resources for a strong drive to finish China. The ultimate gamble was that Germany would either win the western war, or would so use up American and British strength that Japan would in the end keep what she had seized, no matter what happened to Germany.

And so, on the day before Pug in Manila listened to the Army-Navy game, the armada had set out for Hawaii. And as the Japanese task force steamed east, a small American task force headed west. Admiral William Halsey was taking twelve marine fighter planes to Wake Island in the *Enterprise*. Japan had long since illegally fortified every island it held on trust in the Pacific. Now, at the end of November, 1941, President Roosevelt had gotten the money to counterfortify American islands. At Wake the work was half finished, but they still had no air defense.

The second day out, Warren Henry returned from the dawn search and came slanting around to land on the *Enterprise*. The deck rose up at him, the hook caught the number two cable, his stomach thrust hard against the safety belt, and he was down and stopped. Disconnecting belts and cables, gathering up his charts and log sheets, he climbed out into the brisk wind over the deck as another scout plane roared in and jerked to a stop.

The landing officer was shouting. "Hi. All pilots to Scouting

Six ready room at 0900. Admiral Halsey wants a word with you."

In the ready room, the deep comfortable chairs were full. Warren stood against a bulkhead as Halsey came in with the ship's captain and the squadron commanders.

The captain waved a mimeographed sheet. "Okay, you all saw this yesterday, but the admiral has asked me to read it again aloud:

"Battle Order Number One.

- (1) The *Enterprise* is now operating under war conditions.
- (2) At any time, day or night, we must be ready for instant action.
- (3) Hostile submarines may be encountered. . . . 'Steady nerves and stout hearts are needed now.'

Commanding Officer, USS *Enterprise*

Approved: W. F. Halsey

Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy"

The captain stepped back behind the admiral. Halsey's face looked patchy and aged. He squinted around the room. "Thank you, Skipper. I'm told there were questions yesterday. I'm here to accommodate you, gentlemen." When no one spoke he went on, "I'm reliably informed that someone said this paper gave every one of you carte blanche to put the United States of America into the war. Now would that brave soul care to stand?"

Warren Henry stepped forward.

"What's your name?"

"Lieutenant Warren Henry, sir."

"Henry?" Halsey looked a shade less grim. "Are you related to Captain Victor Henry?"

"He's my father, sir."

"He's a fine officer. You think this order permits you to plunge the country into war, do you?"

"Sir, I added yesterday that I was all for it. I think we're in the war now, but fighting with both hands tied behind us."

Halsey's face twitched and he motioned Warren to step back. "Gentlemen," he said in harsh tones, "this force stripped for action weeks ago. All vessels of the United States or of friendly powers have been warned off our path. Unless we shoot first at any ships we encounter, we may never have a chance to shoot. Therefore,

this force will shoot first, and the responsibility is mine— Questions?" He slowly looked around at the young sober faces. "Good day, then, and good hunting."

On the day that the Japanese steaming east and Halsey's ships steaming west made their closest approach, Warren Henry flew the northern search pattern, more than two hundred miles straight toward the Japanese fleet. The Japanese routinely sent a scout plane due south about the same distance. But in the broad Pacific Ocean the game was still blindman's buff. Hundreds of miles of water stretched between the two scouts at their far reach, and the two forces passed in peace.

41

ON THE day Victor Henry left Manila, the Japanese embassy in Rome gave a party for Japanese and American newspaper correspondents. The purpose seemed to be a show of cordiality to counteract all the war talk. A *New York Times* man asked Natalie to come along. She had never before left her baby in the evening, but she asked the chambermaid to take care of him, and went. The rumors of war in the Pacific were eating away Natalie's nerves, and she hoped to learn something concrete at the party.

She came back with a strange tale. Among the American guests had been Herbert Rose, a film distributor in Rome who had once worked in Tokyo and was fluent in both Japanese and Italian. He had approached Natalie and walked her off to a corner. In a few quiet sentences, he had told her to go to Saint Peter's with her uncle the next morning at nine o'clock and stand near Michelangelo's *Pietà*. They would be offered a chance to get out of Italy via Palestine. War between America and Japan was coming in days or hours, Herb believed; he was departing that way himself, though booked to leave for Lisbon on the same plane as Natalie and her uncle. He would tell her no more. He begged her not to discuss the subject inside her hotel. She recounted all this to her uncle while walking on the Via Veneto in a cold drizzle.

Aaron was in a testy mood. "Palestine!" he grumbled. "Why, you'd be getting even farther from Byron, and I from civilization.

It's a hellhole, Natalie, a desert full of flies, disease, and angry Arabs." But he agreed they had better go to Saint Peter's.

Next morning they had to wait for a taxi and did not reach Saint Peter's until after nine. "My least favorite among Italian cathedrals," said Jastrow, as they hurried in. "Ah, but there's the *Pietà*, and what a lovely work it is, Natalie."

As a group of tourists moved off, a rather stout young man lingered behind. "Would you call that a Jew's Jesus, Dr. Jastrow?" he said in German. He took Jastrow's book from under his arm and showed him the photograph on the back. "I recognized you. I'm Avram Rabinovitz. Mrs. Henry, how do you do?" Natalie nodded nervously. "I asked Mr. Rose what other American Jews were left in Rome. It was a great surprise to learn that Dr. Jastrow was here. I'm sailing from Naples tomorrow at four. Are you coming?"

"You're sailing? Are you a ship's captain?" Natalie asked.

The man smiled, but looked serious again as he spoke. His face was Slavic rather than Semitic, with clever, narrow eyes. "Not exactly. I have chartered a vessel. The ship is old and small, and it's been transporting hides around the Mediterranean, so the smell is interesting. But it'll take us there."

Natalie said, "How long a voyage will it be?"

"Well, that depends. The quota of Jews that the British will allow into Palestine this year is used up. The quota keeps Arabs from getting too angry. So our way may be roundabout. Depending on the situation, we may sail straight to Palestine, or we may go to Turkey and then proceed overland into Galilee."

"You're talking about an illegal entry, then, as well as illegal exits, without proper visas." Jastrow sounded severe. "In a situation like this, the first principle is to stay within the law."

"We don't think it can be illegal for a Jew to go home. In any case, there's no choice for my passengers. They're refugees from the Germans, and all other countries have barred the doors to them, including your United States."

"That isn't our situation," Jastrow said. "We have all our documents, and we're flying to the United States in less than two weeks. But for people who do go with you, what is the charge?"

"My job is to move Jews out of Europe. Payment is secondary."

"And once we get to Palestine—then what?"

Rabinovitz gave him an agreeable look. "Well, why not stay? We would be honored to have a great Jewish historian among us."

Natalie put in, "I have a two-month-old infant. Could a small baby make that trip?"

Rabinovitz looked her straight in the eye. "Mrs. Henry, you have heard surely the stories coming from Poland. Maybe you should take some risk to get your baby out of Europe."

"If anything went wrong, we'd never get out of Italy," Jastrow persisted, "until the war ended."

Rabinovitz glanced at his watch. "Let's be honest. I'm not sure you will get out anyway, Dr. Jastrow. I don't think the difficulties you've been having are accidental. I'm afraid you're what some people call a 'blue chip'—that the Italians think they can trade you some day for a lot of 'white chips.' Well, meeting you was a great honor. You want to think this over, I'm sure. Mr. Rose will telephone you tonight at six and ask you whether you want the tickets for the opera. Tell him yes or no, and that will be that."

"Good," Natalie said. "We're deeply grateful."

"For what? Is your baby a girl or a boy?"

"Boy. But he's only half Jewish."

With his crafty grin, Rabinovitz said, "Never mind, we'll take him. We need boys," and he walked rapidly away.

Natalie and her uncle followed him out into the great piazza. Talking the thing over, Aaron tended to dismiss it out of hand, but Natalie wanted to give it thought. The fact that Rose was going troubled her. Jastrow pointed out that Rose was not as secure as they were. If war should break out between the United States and Italy, they had the ambassador's promise of seats on the diplomatic train. Rose had no such assurance. The embassy had given him warning to leave, and he had chosen to stay. If he wanted to chance an illegal exit, that did not mean they had to.

At the hotel, Natalie found the baby awake and fretful. He seemed frail indeed to be exposed to a sea voyage of uncertain destination. One look at her baby, in fact, settled Natalie's mind.

Rose called promptly at six. "Well, do you want the opera tickets?" His voice seemed anxious.

Natalie said, "I think we'll skip it, Herb. But thank your friend."
"You're making a mistake, Natalie," Rose said. "I think this is the last performance. You're sure?"

Natalie told him she was positive.

JANICE Henry left her house and drove toward Pearl City in a cool morning echoing with distant church bells. The baby had wakened her at seven, coughing fearfully; he had a high fever. On the telephone, the doctor had prescribed an alcohol rub to bring the temperature down, but she had no rubbing alcohol. So she had set out for town, leaving the baby with the Chinese maid.

On the crest of the hill, she stopped to look for her husband's ship. The fleet was in, ranged at its moorings: a scattering of cruisers, destroyers and minesweepers, submarines. Off Ford Island, the battleships stood in two majestic lines with sun awnings already rigged; and on the airfield nearby, dozens of planes touched wings in still rows. The harbor wore a Sabbath look.

But the *Enterprise* was nowhere in sight. Janice took binoculars from the glove compartment and scanned the horizon. Nothing. Tuesday would be two weeks that Warren had been gone; and now here she was with a sick baby on her hands. What a life!

Since she had come back from Washington, she had begun to realize that Warren was a professional navy fanatic who made marvelous love to her and otherwise almost ignored her. Janice Lacouture, at twenty-three, a navy baby-sitter! She had spells of rebellion, and sooner or later she meant to have it out with him.

Luckily a small crossroads store was open, with two Japanese children playing on the porch: she might not have to drive clear into town. As she went in, she heard gunfire pop over the harbor, as it had been popping for months in target practice.

The storekeeper bobbed his head at her request, and as he went to find the rubbing alcohol she noticed that the gunfire sounded heavier and planes thrummed overhead. A funny time for a drill, she thought, Sunday morning before colors. From the doorway she spotted the planes, flying quite high, lots of them, in close order. She went to her car for the binoculars. Three planes flew into the field of vision. On their wings were solid orange-red circles.

"Ess, ma'am? Many pranes!" The storekeeper stood beside her, handing her the package with a toothy smile. Janice stared at him. Nearly everybody in the navy assumed the Hawaiian Japanese were spies. Now here was this Jap grinning at her, and Jap planes were actually flying over Hawaii! What could it mean? She snatched the package. The man peered upward at the planes, now beginning to peel off and dive, one by one. With a queer noise in his throat, he regarded her with a blank face, his slant eyes like black glass. The look told Janice what was happening in Pearl Harbor. She jumped into her car and whirled the ignition. He hammered on the door, shouting. She had not paid him.

Janice was an honest young lady, but now with a pulse of childish excitement she shouted at him an obscenity she had never used in her life and shot off up the road.

Accelerator to the floor, she screeched up around curves to the top of the ridge. She was all alone here. Below, silver planes were flitting about the navy base, where the morning mist lay pearly pink around the ships. Columns of water were shooting up, a couple of ships were on fire. But could this really be war?

Then she saw a strange and shocking sight. A battleship vanished. One instant the vessel stood in the outer row, and the next there was only a big red ball surrounded by black-and-yellow smoke. A cracking explosion hurt her ears; the ball of smoke and fire climbed high into the air and exploded again, in a beautiful giant burst of orange and purple, with another delayed *BOOM!* The battleship reappeared dimly in the binoculars, a vast, broken, twisted wreck all on fire. Men were running around and jumping overboard. Horrified, Janice ran to the car and raced home.

The Chinese maid sat glumly in an armchair, dressed for church. "The baby's asleep," she said in clear English; she was island-born and convent-raised. "The Gillettes left already. So I'll have to go to the ten-o'clock mass. Please telephone Mrs. Fenney."

"Anna May, the Japanese are attacking us. Can't you hear the explosions?" Janice gestured at the window. "Turn on the radio."

The baby lay on his back, still doped by the cough medicine, breathing loud and fast. As Janice sponged the hot, flushed little body, she heard a voice on the radio singing "Lovely Hula Hands,"

then an announcer gibbering cheerfully about Cashmere Bouquet soap. The maid came to the doorway of the baby's room. "You sure about the war, Mis' Henry? There's nothing on the radio."

"But I saw a battleship blow up. I saw a *hundred* Jap planes, maybe more! They're out of their minds at that radio station. Here, take Victor. He feels cooler. I'll try to call the Fenneys."

But the line was dead. She heard tires rattling the driveway gravel, and a fist banged at the door. The maid stared at her mistress and didn't move. Janice ran to the door. Bloody-faced, Warren Henry stumbled in, in heavy flying boots, a zipper suit, and a bloodied yellow life jacket. "Hi, have you got twenty bucks?"

"My God, Warren!"

"Pay off the cab, Jan." His voice was hoarse and tight. "Anna May, get out some bandages, will you?"

Janice paid the driver. In the kitchen, the maid was dabbing antiseptic on Warren's blood-dripping left arm. "I'll do that," Janice said, taking the sponge. "Make sure Victor's all right."

Warren grated his teeth as Janice worked on the raw wound. "Jan, what's wrong with Vic?"

"Oh, a fever. A cough. Darling, what *happened* to you?"

"I got shot down. Those bastards killed my radioman. Our squadron flew patrol ahead of the *Enterprise* and ran into them—hey, easy with the antiseptic—"

"Honey, you've got to go to the hospital and get stitched."

"No, no. The hospital will be jammed. That's one reason I came here. And I wanted to be sure you and Vic were okay. I'm going to Ford Island, find out what's happening, and maybe get a plane. Those Jap carriers can't have gone far. We'll be counterattacking, and I'm not missing that. Just bandage it up, Jan."

Janice was dizzyed to have Warren suddenly back, literally fallen out of the sky, bloody, returned from battle. He talked on at a great rate, all charged up. "God, it was weird—I thought those AA bursts were target practice. We could see them forty miles away. We never did spot the Japs until six of them jumped us out of the sun. The way those fellows came diving—"

"Hold still, honey."

"Sorry. I tell you, it was rough. The SBD's a good dive bomber,

but it's a dead pigeon against these Jap Zeros! The speed they've got, the maneuverability! All I could do was keep turning and turning to evade. They got my radioman right away. And they kept coming at me. One of them overshot and hung for a second or two in my sights. I let go with my fifties and I could swear he started smoking, but I lost sight of him because then our *own* AA opened up and the flak was bursting all around me. I don't know whether they got me or a Jap did. All I know is my gas tank caught fire. I popped the canopy and jumped. The wind took the parachute inshore. I landed in a little park off Dillingham—

"I've got the bleeding under control. Just sit quiet for a minute."

"Good girl. Later I want to get at a typewriter. I may file the first combat report of this war on Zeros. Hey? How about that? . . . You should see the sights downtown!" Warren grinned crookedly at his wife. "People out in nightclothes, or less, yelling, running around gawking at the sky. I saw this beautiful Chinese girl crossing Dillingham Boulevard in nothing but a bra and pink panties—"

"You would notice something like that," said Janice. "Even if your arm had been shot clean off." With his good arm, Warren gave her a rough intimate caress, and she slapped his hand. "All right! I've got you plastered up, but I still think you should see a doctor at the naval air station."

"If there's time. I'll have a look at Vic. Get the car out."

A few moments later he opened the car door. "The son of a gun's sleeping peacefully. He feels cool."

"Maybe the fever broke." Janice paused, hand on the gearshift. The car radio was broadcasting an appeal from the governor for calm, with assurances that the attackers had all been driven off.

"Okay, get started," Warren said. "Ye gods, the high brass on this rock must be cutting their collective throats about now. A Sunday morning sneak attack has been a routine battle problem for years."

On the ridge, sightseers stood in the grass beside parked cars, chattering and pointing. Heavy black smoke boiled up out of the anchorage, darkening the sun. Janice stopped the car. Warren swept the harbor with the binoculars. "Good God, Jan, Ford Island's a junkyard! I don't see one undamaged plane. And there's a battlegewagon *capsized*— Hey! They're coming back."

All over the harbor, guns began rattling and black AA balls blossomed in the blue. Warren peered skyward. "That means their carriers are still in range anyway. Great. Move over. I'm driving."

Warren whistled down to Pearl City like an escaping bank bandit. After a few moments of fright, his wife began to enjoy the breakneck ride. Everything was different on this side of time, the side after the Japs attacked; more adventurous, almost more fun. Her boredom and irritability were gone and forgotten.

The fleet landing was a horror. Sailors with blistered faces and hands, with skin hanging in yellow or black scorched pieces from bloody flesh, were being lifted out of whaleboats and loaded onto hospital trucks by men in red-smeared whites. Wounded and unwounded alike were bawling obscenities, and over all rolled the massive thumping and cracking of guns, the wail of sirens, and the roar of airplanes, for the second attack was now in full swing. Hands on hips, Warren Henry surveyed the scene.

"How'll you ever get across?" Janice said in shaken tones.

He strode to the end of the landing to a long canopied boat. "Coxswain, whose barge is this?"

The immaculate sailor at the tiller flipped a salute, eyeing Warren's gory life jacket. "Suh, this is Admiral Radburn's barge."

"Is the admiral on the beach?"

"Yes, suh."

"Do you know how long he'll be?"

"Negative, suh, he just told me to wait."

Warren said, "I'm Lieutenant Henry. I'm a dive-bomber pilot off the *Enterprise*. I flew in this morning, just when the attack started. The Japs shot me down. I have to find another plane, so how's for taking me over to Ford Island?"

The coxswain hesitated, then straightened up and saluted again. "Come aboard, suh. The important thing is to get those sons of bitches. Excuse me, ma'am."

Warren stood in the stern, smiling at her as the barge pulled away. "Get them!" she called. "And come back to me."

"Roger. Be seeing you."

He ducked as a red-and-yellow plane passed not twenty feet over his head, its motor coughing noisily; then it turned sharply

and flew away across the channel. Warren straightened, still grinning, and Janice watched the admiral's beautiful shiny barge carry her bloodied husband away to the flaming smoky midharbor island that was the navy's airfield. He waved and she wildly waved back. She was horror-stricken by what she had seen at the fleet landing; yet never had she felt so full of life, or so much in love.

42

THE SUN poked up over the horizon, painting a red flush on the Clipper's wing. Pug watched the brightening disk rise free of the ocean. The plane had left Wake in the starlit night bound for Midway, the last stop before Honolulu. Forty-eight hours more and his trek halfway around the earth would be over.

The engines changed pitch, rasping at his nerves. The sun moved sideways. The turn was so shallow that Pug felt no tilt in his seat. He walked forward into the galley, where the steward was scrambling eggs. "I'd like to talk to Ed Connelly, if he's free."

The steward smiled, gesturing at the door marked FLIGHT DECK. The naval officer and the Clipper captain had been eating meals together at the island hotels. In the dial-filled cockpit, the captain looked oddly at Pug and removed his headphones.

"Morning, Ed. Why are we heading back?"

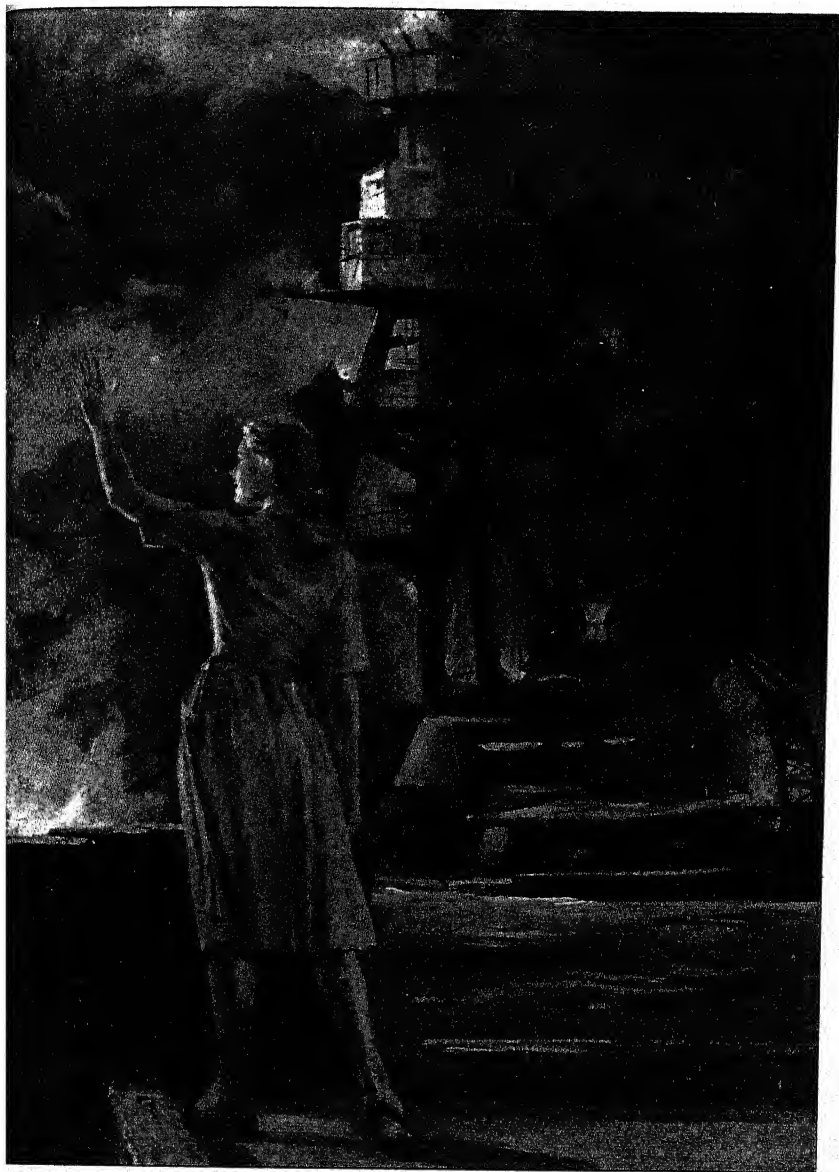
Connelly passed him a radio message: "CincPac harbor circuit general plain language message quote Air raid on Pearl Harbor. This is no drill unquote. Heavy gunfire in anchorage. Recommend you return Wake till situation clarifies."

"I never thought they'd do it," the captain said. "Attacking Pearl! They'll get creamed."

"Let's hope so." Victor Henry returned to his seat, agitated though far from astonished. Here it was at last, he thought.

At Wake, a marine in a jeep waited for him on the landing. The marine commander had put his forces on combat alert and wanted to see Captain Henry. They drove along the beach road, then turned off into the brush. Combat alert had not changed the look of Wake: three flat, sandy peaceful islands in a horseshoe shape around emerald shallows, ringed by the wide sea.





Perfectly camouflaged by scrub, the command post was sunk in coral sand. When Pug saw the radio gear, the crude furniture, and freshly dug soil, the war with Japan became a fact for him. Unlike the Russian trenches, the dugout was roasting hot; and the men frantically working on telephone lines and overhead timbers were sunburned, sweating Americans in shorts. Yet these Americans—like the Russians outside Moscow—were going into the ground to await attack. The United States was in.

The marine colonel, a mild-faced, scrawny man with whom Pug had dined the night before, gave him an envelope to take to CincPac. "Put it in the admiral's hand yourself, Captain. Please! It's a list of my worst shortages. Maybe we can hold out till we're relieved if he'll send us that stuff. And for God's sake, ask him to rush our radar gear. I'm blind without it. I have too few fighters to send any on patrols, and I'm only twenty feet above the ocean at my highest point."

The Clipper passengers were just sitting down to lunch in the hotel when blasts shook the building. Fat cigar-shaped planes were flashing past windows, and Pug noted the orange circles painted on their jungle camouflage. Smoke and fire were already rising from the airfield across the lagoon. Pug had seen bombing, but this attack, destroying an American installation, outraged him. The passengers dived under tables as the planes bombed and machine-gunned the hotel, the repair shops, the dock. Then they came straight for the Pan Am compound, and this was what Pug was fearing. An attack on the Clipper might paralyze his war career before it started. There was no way off Wake except aboard that huge silvery target. Crouched beside the pilot, he saw spurts of water approach the flying boat, saw pieces of the Clipper go flying.

When the bomber sounds faded, Pug followed the pilot out on the pier at a run. Ed Connelly clambered all over the flying boat. "Pug, so help me God, I think we can still fly! They didn't hole the tanks or the engines. At least I don't think so. I'm hauling my passengers out of here now, and I'll argue with Hawaii later."

The passengers eagerly scrambled aboard. The Clipper took off, and it flew. Below, smashed airplanes flamed and all three islands poured smoke.

EVEN IN THE dead of night, nine hours later, Midway was not hard to find. The pilot called Pug to the cockpit to show him the star of flame far ahead on the black sea. "These bastards sure had the thing all lined up. I just heard over the radio they're already in Hong Kong, Malaya, Thailand, they're bombing Singapore—"

"Can we land, Ed?"

"We've got to try. Midway has a lot of underground tanks. And if we can just set down, we can fuel. Soooo—here goes."

The flying boat dropped low over dark waters lit only by the glare from blazing buildings. The airfields of Midway, they soon learned, had been shelled by a Japanese cruiser and a destroyer. A mob of fire fighters was flooding the blazes with chemicals and water, generating giant billows of acrid red smoke. Pug found his way to the commandant's office and tried to get news of Pearl Harbor. The lieutenant on duty was obsequious and vague. The commandant was out inspecting the island's air defenses, he said, and he had no authority to show top secret dispatches.

"How about the *California*? I'm to take command of her."

The lieutenant looked impressed. "The *California*? There was no word of her. I'm sure she's all right, sir."

Victor Henry slept a little, though he got up well before dawn to pace the cool hotel veranda. Ordinarily he would have seized the chance to inspect Midway, for it was a big installation, but today nothing could draw him out of sight of the flying boat, rising and falling on the swells and bumping the dock with dull booms.

The four hours to Hawaii seemed to Pug like forty. Time froze. At last the steward came and spoke to him, smiling. "Captain Connelly would like you to come up forward, sir."

Ahead, through the plexiglass, the green sunny humps of the Hawaiian Islands showed over the horizon.

"Nice, isn't it?" said the pilot. "Stick around and we'll take a look at the fleet."

Nobody aboard the Clipper knew what to expect. As the plane came in from the north over the harbor and hooked around to descend, Victor Henry was struck sick by what his disbelieving eyes saw. All along the east side of Ford Island the battleships of the Pacific Fleet lay careened, broken, overturned, in the dis-

order of a child's toys in a bathtub. Pug desperately tried to pick out the *California* in the hideous, smoky panorama.

From the customs shed he went straight to the CincPac building. Everyone he saw wore unsure, scared expressions. A handsome ensign, at a desk that barred access to the inner offices, looked incredulously at Pug in wrinkled slacks and seersucker jacket. "You mean CincPac, sir? Admiral Kimmel?"

"That's right," Pug said. "Give the admiral a message, please. I'm Captain Victor Henry. I've just come in on the Clipper with a letter for him from the marine commandant on Wake Island."

The handsome ensign wearily picked up a telephone. "You may have to wait all day, or a week, sir."

A minute later, a pretty woman in a tailored blue suit appeared. "Captain Henry? This way, sir." She led him along the corridor to high doors labeled in gold COMMANDER IN CHIEF, PACIFIC FLEET.

"Admiral, here's Captain Henry."

"Hey, Pug! Great day, how long has it been?" Kimmel was dressed in faultless whites and looked tanned and fit. "Have I seen you since you worked for me on the *Maryland*?"

"I don't think so, sir." They shook hands.

"Well, sit you down. Been flying high, haven't you? Observing in Russia, and all that, eh?" Kimmel's voice was as hearty as ever. This was an outstanding officer, Pug thought, who had been marked for success all the way. Now, after twenty years of war exercises against an enemy code-named Orange, the fleet he commanded lay wrecked by the Orange team in one quick real action.

"I know how little time you have, sir." Pug placed the letter from Wake Island on the admiral's desk.

"Not at all. It's nice to see an old familiar face. You were a good gunnery officer, Pug." Kimmel opened the letter and scanned it. "Don't you have a couple of boys in the service now?"

"Yes, sir. One flies an SBD off the *Enterprise*, and—"

"Well, fine! They got none of the carriers, Pug, because the carriers at least followed my orders and were on one hundred percent alert. And the other lad?"

"He's aboard the *Devilfish* in Manila."

"Manila, eh? I only hope the army air people there aren't as to-

tally asleep as they were here! The army is *completely* responsible for the safety of these islands, Pug, including air patrol and radar search. The documents leave no doubt about *that*, fortunately. Were you at Wake when they hit? Was it as bad as this?"

"About two dozen bombers worked us over. They went after planes and air installations. No ships were there to get bombed."

CincPac shot a glance at Victor Henry, as though suspecting irony in his words.

"How did the *California* make out, Admiral?"

"Why, don't you know?"

"No, sir. I came straight from the Clipper."

Kimmel reported briskly, "She took two torpedoes to port and several bomb hits. She's down by the bow, Pug, and sinking. They're still counterflooding, so she may not capsize. The preliminary estimate is a year and a half out of action, possibly two."

Victor Henry's voice trembled. "If I broke a lot of necks, including my own, could I put her back in six months?"

"It's hopeless. A salvage officer will relieve Chip Wallenstone." The tone was sympathetic. "You'll get another command, Pug."

"There aren't that many battleships, Admiral. Not now."

Again the quick, suspicious glance. Kimmel gestured at the letter Pug had brought. "And there isn't the stuff to relieve Wake, because the Russians and the British have been given it. Mr. Roosevelt was a great navy President until that European fracas started. But then he took his eye off the ball. Our real enemy's always been *here*, in the Pacific. The President got too damned interested in the wrong enemy, the wrong ocean, and the wrong war."

It gave Victor Henry a strange sensation, after Berlin and London and Moscow, to hear from Kimmel the old unchanged navy verbiage about the importance of the Pacific. "Well, Admiral, I know how busy you are," he said.

"Yes, well, I do have a thing or two on my mind. Nice seeing you, Pug," said the admiral, in a sudden tone of dismissal.

JANICE answered Pug's telephone call and warmly urged him to come and stay. Pug wanted to drop his bags and get into uniform to go to the *California*. He took suitable if brief delight in his

grandson; accepted Janice's commiseration over his ship with a grunt. She offered to get the maid to press his whites. In the spare room he opened his suitcase to pull out the crumpled uniform, and his letter to Pamela Tudsbury fell to the floor.

He had written it during the long hop from Guam to Wake. Glancing at it now, it embarrassed him. There wasn't much love in it—it was mostly a reasoned case for his living out his life as it was. Their romance now seemed so dated, so unlike him, so utterly outside realities. Pamela was a beautiful young woman, but odd, and the best proof of her oddness was her very infatuation with him. She had ignited something in him in those turbulent hours in Moscow, and in his elation over the *California* he had allowed himself to half believe in a new life. But now—how finished it all was! The *California*, Pamela, the honor of the United States, and—God alone knew—any hope for the civilized world.

He did not tear the letter up. He did not think he could write a better one. The situation of a man past fifty declining a young woman's love was too awkward and ridiculous. On his way to the navy yard he mailed it, with sadness.

Sadder yet was the trip to the *California*. The launch passed all along Battleship Row, for the *California* lay nearest the channel entrance. One by one Pug contemplated these gargantuan gray vessels he knew so well, fire-blackened, bomb-blasted, down by the head, down by the stern, sitting on the bottom, or turned turtle. Grief and pain tore at him.

He was a battleship man. Navy air had seemed to him fine for reconnaissance, bombing support, and torpedo attacks, but not for the main striking arm. He had argued with the fly-boys that when war came, it would be the battlewagons with their big guns who slugged it out for command of the sea. The fliers had asserted that one aerial bomb or torpedo could sink a battleship; he had retorted that sixteen-inch steel plate wasn't porcelain, and that a hundred guns might slightly mar the aim of a pilot flying a little tin crate. He had been as wrong as a man could be in the one crucial judgment of his profession.

The *California* listed about seven degrees to port, spouting thick streams of filthy water in rhythmic pumped spurts. The smoke-

streaked, flame-blistered steel wall, leaning far over Pug's head as the motor launch drew up to the accommodation ladder, gave him a dizzy, doomed feeling. The climb up the canted and partly submerged ladder was dizzying, too.

How often Pug had cheered himself with pictures of this reception: side boys in white saluting, honor guard on parade, commanding officers shaking hands at the gangway—to be the star, the center, of this ritual was worth a lifetime of the toughest drudgery. Instead, he met a vile stink as he stepped on the sloping quarter-deck. "Request permission to come aboard, sir," he said to the officer of the day in greasy khakis.

"Permission granted, sir." The OOD's salute was smart, his red, boyish face attractive. Five sheet-draped corpses lay on the quarter-deck. The smell came partly from them, partly from gasoline fumes, from burned oil, burned wood, burned flesh, broken waste lines; a rancid effluvium of disaster. But above the mess on the main deck the superstructure jutted into the sunset sky, massive, clean, and undamaged. The long sixteen-inch guns were trained neatly fore and aft, newly painted gray. The old Prune Barge was tantalizingly alive and afloat—wounded, but still mighty.

"I'm Captain Victor Henry."

"Oh! Yes, sir! Captain Wallenstone's expecting you." He said to a messenger, "Benson, tell the CO that Captain Henry is here."

"One moment. Where is your CO?"

"Sir, he's with the salvage officers in the forward engine room."

"I know the way." Walking familiar decks and passageways that were weird in their fixed slant, Pug got himself down to the forward engine room, where four officers huddled on a high catwalk, playing powerful hand lights on a sheet of oil-covered water.

With little ceremony, he introduced himself and joined in the engineering talk about saving the ship. The quantity of water flooding through the torpedo holes was more than the pumps could throw out, so the ship was slowly settling. Pug asked about more pumps, but there were none to be had in the anchorage. Sending divers to patch the holes or even to seal off the damaged spaces one by one would take too long. The *California* was done for.

Wallenstone took Victor Henry up to his cabin, spacious and

intact. It was a blessed thing to smell fresh air again streaming in through windward portholes. A Filipino steward brought them coffee. The captain appeared to know a lot about Pug. He asked what Roosevelt was really like and whether the Russians could hold out much longer against the Germans.

"Oh, by the way," he said, as Pug got up to leave, "quite a bit of mail accumulated here for you. I'm not sure that"—he opened and closed desk drawers—"yes, here it is, all together." He handed Pug a bulky envelope. "You wouldn't believe what this ship looked like two days ago," the captain said sadly, as they crossed the main deck in the twilight. "She was the smartest ship in this man's navy."

At the quarterdeck the bodies were gone. "Well, they took those poor devils away," the captain said. "That's the worst of it. At the last muster, forty-seven were still missing. They're down below, Henry, all drowned. Oh, God! *Where* was our air cover?"

"Is that the *Enterprise*?" Pug pointed at a black shape moving down channel, showing no lights.

Wallenstone peered at the silhouette. "Yes. Thank God *she* wasn't in port Sunday morning."

"My son's a flier on board her. Maybe I'll get to see him. First time in a long while."

"That should cheer you, if anything can. I know how you must feel. All I can say is, I'm sorry, Henry." He held out his hand.

Victor Henry hesitated. In that tiny pause, he thought that if this man had been wiser than all the rest—after all, he too had received a war warning—and had ordered a dawn air alert, the *California* might be the most famous battleship in the navy now, afloat and ready to fight, and Wallenstone a national hero. Instead, he was offering a handshake to the man who would never relieve him, because he had let the enemy sink his ship.

But could he, Pug Henry, have done any better? A battleship captain who roused his crew for dawn general quarters in port while the other ships slept would have been a ridiculous eccentric. The entire fleet had been dreaming. That was the main and forever unchangeable fact of history. The sinking of the *California* was a tiny footnote. He shook Wallenstone's hand and left.

In the dim dashboard light of the navy car, Pug glanced over

his mail; official stuff for the most part, with a letter from Rhoda and one from Madeline. He did not open either of them.

"Dad!" Warren not only was at home, he had already changed into slacks and a loose shirt. He lunged at his father and threw an arm around him, holding the other stiffly at his side. "Well, you made it! Clear from Moscow! How are you, Dad?"

"I've just visited the *California*."

"Oh. Bourbon, then, Dad? And water?"

"Bourbon. Not that much water. What happened to your arm?"

"Jan told you about the trouble I ran into. It's just a few scratches. I'm still flying. Come, it's cooler out here, Dad."

On the shadowy screened porch, Pug bitterly described the *California's* state. Warren was scornful. The battleship navy had been a lot of sleepy fat cats, obsessed by promotions and ignorant of the air. But the Japs had grasped naval aviation and had made a slick opening play. "We'll get 'em," he said, "but it'll be a long hard pull, and the fliers'll do it, Dad. Not the battlewagons."

"Seems to me a few airplanes got caught on the ground," Pug growled, feeling the bourbon comforting and radiant inside him.

"Sure, this whole base was all unbuttoned. If Halsey had been CincPac, he'd have kept this damn fleet on dawn and dusk GQs for a year. He'd have run patrols till the planes fell apart. He'd have been the most hated son of a bitch in Hawaii, but when they came he'd have been waiting for 'em! Why, we stripped ship in November. We've run darkened ever since, with warheads in our torpedoes, and bombs in the planes, and depth charges on ready. Tell me, how's Briny? Did you see him in Manila?"

The bourbon helped Pug's sickened spirit, but talking to Warren was better medicine. His son was changed: more relaxed, rather hard-bitten; he had fought with the enemy and survived. That edge was in his bearing, though he deferred carefully to Pug.

"I'll tell you, Dad," he said, bringing him a refill, "I'm not saying this isn't the worst defeat in our history. The navy will be a hundred years living it down. But the Congress voted for war today with only one dissenting vote! Nothing else could have accomplished that."

Pug had wanted to examine his mail before dinner, but not

wanting to stop the talk, he told Warren about his meeting with Kimmel. The young aviator flipped an impartial hand at the complaint of too much war matériel going to Europe. "Stupid feeble excuse. It's got to cost several million lives to stop the Germans. Whose lives? The whole game is to keep the Russians fighting."

"You know, you ought to go over in your spare time, Warren, and straighten out CincPac."

"I'd have to move fast to catch him while he's still CincPac."

"Oh? You got some inside scoop?"

"Dad, somebody's head's got to roll."

"Dinner, fellas," Janice called.

Pug talked straight through dinner about his adventures in Russia. Janice had provided red wine, and though he wasn't much of a wine drinker, tonight he poured down glass after glass. Over brandy, back on the porch, he returned to the subject of the *California* and asked his son what he thought he should do.

Warren said, "Well, Dad, you'd better go back to CincPac's staff tomorrow and pound desks till you get a command. You'll get what you ask for. But you have to be quick. If Mr. Roosevelt remembers you're on the loose again, he'll send you on some other mission. Although it must be very interesting work, at that."

"Warren, I hope you believe me, nearly everything I've been doing in the past two years has given me a swift pain. I've talked to great men, and that's a privilege, sure. But the bloom soon comes off the rose. I never want to get out of sight of ships again, and I never want to see the inside of another embassy." He grinned. "Right now, boy, I'm drunk as a skunk. Thanks, Warren. Thanks for everything, and God bless you. Sorry I did so much talking. Now, if my legs will support me, I'll go to bed."

He did not stir till noon. Janice was out on the back lawn, playing with the baby on a blanket, when her father-in-law emerged on the porch in a white silk kimono, carrying a manila envelope.

"Hi, Dad," she called. "How about some breakfast?"

He sat in a wicker chair. "You mean lunch. No thanks, I'm still off schedule from the traveling. Your maid's bringing me coffee. I'll have a look at my mail, then mosey on down to CincPac."

A few minutes later Janice heard a loud clink. Victor Henry

sat upright staring at a letter in his lap, his hand still on the coffee cup he had set down so hard. "What's the matter, Dad?"

"Eh? What? Nothing. That coffee's mighty hot. I burned my tongue. Where's Warren, by the way?"

"Went to the ship. He expects to be back for dinner, but I guess we can never be sure about anything anymore."

"That's exactly right." His voice and his manner were queer, she thought. Covertly she watched him read and reread two handwritten letters. He stuffed the pile of unopened official mail back in the big envelope and stood up. "Say, Jan, I'm a little tireder than I figured. I may even crawl back in the sack for a bit."

His bedroom door was still shut when Warren came home. Janice told him what had been happening. He knocked cautiously. "Dad?" Rapping louder, he tried the knob and went in. Soon he came out with an empty brandy bottle. The cork and foil lay in his palm. "It was a fresh bottle, Jan. He drank it all."

"Is he all right?"

"He's just out. Out cold."

"Maybe you should look at his mail." Warren gave her a frigid glare. "Listen," she said, "those letters, whatever they were, upset him. You'd better find out what the trouble is."

"If he wants me to know, he'll tell me."

Warren did not speak again until after dinner. "Dad's taking the *California* thing hard," he finally said. "Did you listen to the evening news?" She shook her head. "Big air strike on Manila. They made a mess of the Cavite Navy Yard. That's all the news said. But the communicator on the *Enterprise* told me two submarines were bombed, and one was sunk. That was the *Devilfish*."

"Oh God, no!"

"And there's no word on survivors."

43

TO MILITARY specialists, "Clark Field" is the name of a United States defeat as grave as Pearl Harbor. With this catastrophe at the main army airfield on Luzon, the Philippines lost their air cover, the Asiatic Fleet had to flee south, and the rich South Sea islands

were laid bare for conquest. There has never been a rational explanation for what happened. History ignores Clark Field and remembers Pearl Harbor, because two great disasters in one day are too much. Clark Field was half a day late for immortality.

The Japanese had no hope of surprising the Philippines after Pearl Harbor. Their bombers took off from Formosa and droned straight in over the main island of Luzon just before high noon. The ground observers, on a war footing now, sent a spate of reports to the command center, tracking the attackers from the coast all the way to their objective. The Japanese got there unopposed, nevertheless, and found, to their own surprise, the fighters and bombers of America's formidable Far East Air Force lined up on the ground. They laid utter waste to it and flew away. No course now remained for the American forces in the South Seas but last-ditch stands and surrenders.

The Japanese at once set about to cash in on this startling success. Step one was to make Manila Bay uninhabitable for the United States Navy. Two days after Clark Field, a horde of bombers carefully destroyed the Cavite naval base. The *Devilfish* and Byron Henry were at the center of this attack: hence the report. But it was another submarine, the *Sealion*, that was sunk at Cavite.

When the attack began, Byron was ashore with a working party, drawing torpedoes. The wail of the siren broke out not far from the big open shed of the torpedo shop. The overhead crane clattered to a halt. The repair machinery quieted down and chiefs, torpedo-men, and machinist's mates trotted away to battle stations.

Byron's party had four torpedoes in the truck. He decided to load two more before leaving. His orders called for six, and false alarms had been plentiful in the last two days. But with the big crane shut down, it was slow work moving an assembled Mark 14 torpedo, a ton and a half of steel cylinder packed with explosives. The sweating *Devilfish* sailors were rigging one to the guy chains of a small cherry-picker crane when Byron's first torpedo-man glanced at the sky. "Mr. Henry, here they come."

Hansen had the best eyes on the *Devilfish*. It took Byron half a minute to discern the high-up V of silvery specks. "God, yes, fifty or sixty of 'em," he said.

"They're headed this way, sir. Target angle zero."

"So I see. Well, let's hurry." The sailor at the wheel of the cherry picker began gunning the motor, tightening the chains on the torpedo. "Hold it!" Byron exclaimed, hearing a distant explosion. More *CRUMPS!* sounded closer. Now Byron's ears caught a Warsaw noise—a high whistle ascending in pitch. "*Take cover!*"

The sailors dived under the truck and a heavy worktable nearby. An explosion blasted close to the shed, then a cataract of noise burst all around, and Byron too threw himself under the table. He had never endured a bombing like this. Over and over he gritted his teeth at the cracking blasts that shook the ground like an earthquake. There seemed to him a good chance that he would get killed. But at last the noise lessened and he ran outside. Flame and smoke were billowing all around and walls starting to crash down. The sky was flecked with AA bursting impotently far below the bombers. The *Devilfish* sailors came huddling around Byron. "Hey, Mr. Henry, it looks kind of bad, don't it?" "Are we going back aboard?" "Should we finish loading the fish?"

"Wait." Byron hurried through the smoky shed to see the situation on the other side. Hansen came with him. He was an old able submariner, a fat Swede from Oregon, more than six feet tall. Hansen had failed to make chief because once in Honolulu he had resisted arrest by three marine shore patrolmen, had given one a brain concussion, and had broken another's arm. He liked Byron and had taught him a lot without seeming to.

On the other side of the torpedo shop large fires also roared and crackled. In the street a bomb had blown a large crater; water was shooting up out of a broken main. Three heavy navy trucks stood halted by the pit, and their Filipino drivers were peering down the hole. "Looks like we're stuck, Hansen," Byron shouted.

"I don't know, Mr. Henry. If these trucks would move clear maybe we could get out."

One of the drivers called to Byron, "Say, is there a way through this shop to the wharf?"

Byron called back, "All blocked. Solid fire, and walls down."

Hansen said, "Mr. Henry, the fire's gonna spread to this shop and all these fish are gonna go." Byron understood the pain in his

voice. Without torpedoes, what good was a submarine squadron?

He said, "Well, if you could operate that overhead crane, maybe we could still pull out a few."

"Mr. Henry, I'm not a crane man."

Standing by the flooding crater was a lean civilian. "I'm a crane operator. I'll help you get the torpedoes out."

"Great." Byron turned to a truck driver. "Will you guys give us a hand? We want to move some torpedoes."

After a rapid exchange with the other drivers, the Filipino exclaimed, "Okay! Where we go?"

IN THE bay, meanwhile, a gray speedboat swooped alongside the *Devilfish*, which was under way and heading for the submarine base at Bataan. It was Red Tully's speedboat, and he was bringing the skipper of the *Devilfish* back from the base. Branch Hoban jumped from the speedboat to the forecastle of his vessel as Captain Tully yelled up at the bridge through a megaphone, "Ahoy the *Devilfish*! What about *Seadragon* and *Sealion*?"

"All right when we left, sir," Lieutenant Aster called. "But they're stuck alongside. No power."

"Tell Branch to lie off here. I'll go have a look."

Hoban arrived on the bridge as the speedboat thrummed away. "Lady, what about Briny and the working party?"

Aster gestured back toward the flaming navy yard. "They never showed. I figured I'd better get away from alongside."

"Damn right. Glad you were aboard to do it."

In a short time the speedboat returned and Tully came aboard, white-faced. "Bad business. I think *Sealion*'s a goner—she's on fire and sinking fast. The *Pigeon*'s trying to tow *Seadragon* clear. Better go back in, Branch, and see if you can help." A motor whaleboat was puttering toward the *Devilfish*. "Who's this?" Tully said.

Hoban shaded his eyes. "It's Pierce."

The young seaman scrambled aboard, his face soot-covered. "Captain, Mr. Henry sent me. The working party's all right."

"Well, thank God! Where are they?"

"They're taking torpedoes out of the shop."

Tully exclaimed, "The *torpedo* shop! Now?"

"Yes, sir. The fire sort of blew away in another direction, so Mr. Henry and Hansen got these trucks and—"

"You come with me," Tully said. "Branch, I'm going back in."

But when the squadron commander and the sailor reached the blazing navy yard, there was no way to get to the torpedo shop. Smoking debris blocked every route. "Captain Tully, sir, I think I see them trucks," said Pierce. "See? Over by the water tower."

Tully pushed his way through cars, ambulances, and foot traffic. He found Byron Henry, almost unrecognizably blackened, sitting on top of heaped torpedoes in a truck, drinking a Coca-Cola. The three trucks were full of torpedoes, two cherry-picker crane trucks held more, and a small army truck was piled with stenciled crates. The *Devilfish* working party lay on the grass in exhausted attitudes, all except Hansen, who sat smoking a pipe.

"Hello there, Byron," Tully called.

Byron turned around and tried to jump up, but it was hard to do on the heap of long cylinders. "Oh, good afternoon, sir."

"How many did you get?"

"Twenty-six, sir. Then the fire closed in."

"I see you scooped up a load of spare parts, too."

"That was Hansen's idea, sir." Byron indicated the torpedoman, who had leaped to his feet on recognizing Captain Tully.

"What's your rating?"

"Torpedoman first class, sir."

"That's where you're wrong. You're a chief torpedoman."

Hansen's eyes gleamed at Ensign Henry. Tully looked at the trove of rescued torpedoes. "Suppose you drive this haul around to Mariveles, Byron. And I'll want a report on this, with the names and ratings of your working party and of these drivers."

NEXT morning Byron presented himself to Captain Tully. The squadron commander was working at a desk in a Quonset hut on the beach at Mariveles harbor, a deep cove in the mountainous Bataan peninsula. Byron handed him a two-page report. Tully glanced at it. "Pretty skimpy document."

"It has the facts, Captain, and all the names and ratings."

"Branch told me you're allergic to paper work."

"It's not my strong point, sir. I'm sorry."

"Now, did he tell you what I want you for?"

"Just something about salvage, sir."

"Byron, the Japs are bound to land soon. We probably can't hold Manila, but as long as MacArthur hangs on to Bataan, the squadron can go on operating out of Mariveles. This is a hell of a lot closer to Japan than any other sub base we'll have for a good long while. So—the idea is to clean out of Cavite *and* Manila every single item we can use, and fetch it here. You seem to have a sort of scavenger instinct." Tully laughed, and Byron responded with a polite smile. "You'll work on this until the *Devilfish* goes out on operations. Report to Admiral Hart's headquarters in Manila."

"Aye aye, sir."

"Admiral Hart's an old submariner. He appreciated what I told him about those torpedoes. He's writing a letter of commendation. I've written your father about your exploit, too."

"Yes, Captain."

Tully irresolutely took off his glasses and looked at the erect, impassive ensign. "Byron. Do you still want to go to the Atlantic? With all hell busting out here?"

"Yes, sir, I do want that."

"You do? When there's only our squadron now to oppose the Japs on the sea? Here's where we need you."

Byron did not reply.

"As for your wife and baby in Italy—that's unfortunate, but you know, they'll be enemy aliens now."

"Sir, we're not at war with Italy."

"It's inevitable. Hitler's scheduled to make this big speech today, you know. Everybody expects him to declare war, and old Musso will follow suit PDQ. Your wife will be interned, but after a while she'll be exchanged. I'm sure she'll be all right."

"Captain Tully, my wife's Jewish."

The squadron commander turned a bit red. He avoided Byron's eye. "Well now, that's a problem. I still don't see what you can do about it. However, Byron," he said, looking up, "I'm going to recommend your transfer to Submarine Force Atlantic—as and when the *Devilfish* gets a replacement for you. Not before."

Byron Henry showed no sign of the relief that filled him. "Thank you, Captain Tully."

"One more thing. Your commanding officer concurs in this, so congratulations." And he laid on the desk before Byron a gold pin, the dolphins of a submariner.

44

Catastrophe From "World Empire Lost"

From the moment the Japanese correctly decided that the war in Europe was their big chance to take East Asia, a hard choice confronted them: should they first move north against the Soviet Union by invading Siberia; or south, to scoop up the weakly held treasures of the European colonies? The move south was tempting. But in warfare one must not be misled by mere easy loot or the line of least resistance.

The stakes of this war comprised nothing less than political redistribution of the world's land masses. In this radical global conflict, Germany's attack on the Soviet Union was her great bid. Once master of Russia, Germany would have been invincible. The Japanese therefore should have moved to help Germany crush the Soviet Union. With Germany triumphant, Japan could have taken anything in East Asia she wanted. Had she moved into Siberia in the autumn of 1941, the German drive to Moscow would have succeeded. For what saved Moscow in December was only Stalin's desperate denuding of the Siberian front for reserves to throw into the capital's defense.

Moreover, the mere fact of a Japanese invasion of Siberia in the autumn might have brought on a collapse of the Bolshevik regime. In mid-October, whole government departments fled Moscow in disgraceful panic. And by December Russia was tottering from Leningrad to the Crimea.* This was the once-in-a-thousand-years opportunity for the Japanese nation. Its irresolute leaders let the moment slip.

The first mistake, then, was to go south. But the Axis might still have won the war had Japan not compounded the blunder with a second one that verged on insanity—the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The whole hope of Axis victory lay in keeping America divided and soft. This prospect was in sight. Half of America would have rejoiced

* See map on page 375

at a German conquest of the Soviet Union. Lend-Lease was bogged down in red tape and inertia, reflecting the discord and confusion in the people. Roosevelt was conducting war talks with the British, but he never moved one visible step beyond the range of public opinion.

Then, overnight, a hundred thirty million uncertain, divided Americans became one angry mass thirsting for battle. The Congress, which in August had extended a draft law by one vote after weeks of debate, now unanimously passed fierce declarations of war, and Roosevelt's long-plotted war programs, in a few hours. This was the chief result of Pearl Harbor, for the fleet was soon repaired and expanded.

If one asks, "How did Germany permit such a catastrophe to occur?" the answer is that we were not consulted. We found out that Pearl Harbor was the target when the Americans did—on December 7, when the torpedoes and bombs exploded. For the Axis of Germany, Japan, and Italy never existed as a military reality. Italy, like Japan, had gone its own way without consulting Germany. Mussolini had declined to fight when Hitler attacked Poland, and invaded Greece without notifying Hitler. It was every man for himself, and unhappy Germany was tied to second-rate partners who made rash plunges that ruined her.

On December 11, the final calamity occurred. Adolf Hitler—after pausing for four days in which History herself must have held her breath—summoned the Reichstag and declared war on the United States.

Franklin Roosevelt, in his speech to Congress on December 8, had not mentioned Germany. And with good reason! The surge of war spirit in his country was directed one hundred percent against "infamous" Japan. As usual, the wily President did not stick his neck out.

For four anxious days it appeared to some of our staff that, thanks to Pearl Harbor, America might turn its back entirely on Europe to cope with Japan; Lend-Lease would dry up altogether and we would have the breathing space in which to strangle England and knock out the Soviet Union. We could then deal with the U.S.A. in our own time.

However, the Fuhrer was under violent pressure to "honor" the Pact of Steel, the basis of the Axis chimera. To call Pearl Harbor an "attack" by America on Japan was stretching language, but Japan did so and demanded that Germany come to her aid. Hitler certainly now had the right to demand in return that Japan declare war on the Soviet Union. But he never did. He allowed Japan to take no action against Russia, while he plunged the German people into war with America.

With this one mystifying blowup, the Führer threw away his historic gains and the future of the Reich.

I am aware that other writers, like Churchill, place the turning point of the war a year later, when the turn became visible in the field. But the true turn was Pearl Harbor—though we did score our greatest successes and expand our short-lived German empire to its farthest reach in 1942, long after Pearl Harbor and the halt at Moscow. Our U-boats sent fleets of British and American ships to the bottom of the Atlantic. Our armies marched to the Caucasus Mountains, the Caspian Sea, and the Nile. But Germany after 1941 was like a charging elephant with a bullet in its brain, trampling and killing its tormentors with its last momentum before falling. The bullet was Pearl Harbor.

45

THE DOOR stood open to Natalie's bedroom, and Hitler's screeching woke the baby. In the sitting room, Natalie had the radio low, but at the Führer's sudden shriek—"ROOSEVELT!"—she and Aaron looked at each other in alarm, and Louis began crying.

"He is a maniac, after all." Slumped in an armchair in a bathrobe and muffler, Aaron Jastrow shook his head. "I confess I never grasped it before. I thought he playacted." With a faintly contemptuous glance at her uncle, Natalie went to the baby.

Jastrow had listened to few Hitler speeches. They bored him. History was full of such tyrants who had strutted their brief seasons and passed away. But now, hearing Hitler's crazed, queerly coherent comparison between Roosevelt and himself, Jastrow lost his philosophic stance and became scared.

The Italians had already canceled American exit visas. The chargé had said, however, that Aaron and Natalie should still plan to leave on the fifteenth if, meantime, war was not declared. For four days Jastrow had slept and eaten little. Now Hitler's speech seemed to be clanging shut an iron door.

"Is there any hope?" Natalie said, carrying in the crying baby.

"He hasn't declared war yet. But listen . . ." Jastrow waited for the raucous cheers of Hitler's audience and roars of "*Sieg Heil*" to die down. "I'm afraid that was it. He said he's called in the United States diplomats and given them their papers."

"Well, I couldn't be less surprised." Without much effort at modesty, Natalie opened her sweater, flashed a white breast, and stroked the baby's cheek, smiling as he quieted and began sucking.

Her uncle shut off the radio. "Mussolini still has to talk."

"Oh, Aaron, what choice has he? He'll declare war."

Jastrow sighed heavily. "I suppose so. Natalie, I'm sorry, deeply and tragically sorry, for having involved you and your baby—"

"No, no. Don't rake it over now. *Don't*. I can't stand that."

Subsiding, he sipped at a glass of sherry, glancing at his niece with a hangdog expression. "I might telephone the embassy, my dear, and ask about plans for the diplomatic train."

"That's a good idea, if you can get through. Otherwise we'd better go there."

"I'm planning to, in any case." He made the call, but the lines were busy. "One thing wrong with being a historian," he said, "is the way it distorts one's view of the present. But I can read the past fairly well, and I have some clarity about the future. Hitler and Mussolini cannot last, my dear. This gaudy, shabby, militaristic madhouse in Europe will be crushed by Russia and America. The only question is how soon. Well, I'd better dress."

"Yes, do that, Aaron."

"I'll just finish my wine first."

Natalie arose and took the baby into the bedroom to avoid a row. She had no patience left for this vain, cranky old man who had mired her and her baby in this peril; though in the end—she always came back to this—she herself was responsible. Where had she committed the fatal stupidity? In coming back to Italy? In not taking the German plane out of Zurich? In not following Herb Rose to the Palestine ship? No, something deep was wrong with her; she was a terrible fool. All her life she had been floating like dandelion fuzz on the wind. She was Jewish, but the label meant nothing to her beyond the trouble it caused. She had married a Christian without giving the clash of backgrounds much thought. What a queer, disjointed chain of happenings had created this sleepy, blue-eyed little living thing at her breast!

Sometimes she dreamed that none of this had happened. Relief and joy would fill her in her sleep at finding that she was out of the

nightmare; cold, sinking sadness would follow when she awoke on the wrong side of the dream line. But at least on this side the baby dwelt. He was her anchor, the most real thing in her life. Beyond it—in the hotel, in Rome, in Europe—all was danger and darkening horizons. The diplomatic train was the very last chance. She tucked the infant in bed and dressed to go to the embassy.

"Ah, my dear, you look very well." In the sitting room Aaron reclined grandly on a couch in a handsome blue cape.

"Balderdash. If I ever get home, one of my first orders of business will be to burn this damned dress."

Waving his glass with queer, stiff jauntiness, Aaron laughed. "It's grand that you've kept your sense of humor," he said, although Natalie had been serious. "Sit down, my dear. Don't pace."

"Aren't we going to the embassy?"

"Natalie, you know Father Enrico Spanelli, the Vatican librarian? Well, he's coming to take us to the Piazza Venezia to hear Mussolini. He's getting us into the press section."

"What! Good Lord, I don't want to go there with the baby in that Fascist mob! What about—"

Jastrow held up a cautionary hand and began scrawling on a pad. They did this sometimes, in case microphones had been planted in their suite. The sheet he passed to her read: "If it's war he'll take us straight to the American embassy. That's the idea. We'll be out of the hotel, where we might be picked up."

She wrote back, "Why do you trust him?"

He said softly, "Natalie, do you know that I am a Catholic?"

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, then they never told you. I thought perhaps you were being tactful, all these years."

Puzzled and disconcerted, Natalie shrugged. "Are you serious?"

"Oh, very. It's the family skeleton. I converted when I was twenty-three." He grinned sheepishly. "It never took. I fear I'm the wrong type for any religion. At the time the act was sincere."

Aaron told her about a Radcliffe girl he had tutored in history, a girl of a wealthy Catholic family. After a stormy year and a half the love affair had collapsed. He had finished his doctorate at Yale, to put the Harvard memories behind him. By that time he had

decided his conversion was a mistake. Thereafter, whenever the question of his religion came up, he had mentioned his self-evident Jewish origin and said no more.

But he had already made the bad mistake of telling his family. "It probably shortened my father's life," he said gloomily, "and your parents never got over the shock, though I later wrote your father that I considered myself a nonpracticing Jew and nothing else. I've only discussed this with one other person in more than thirty years, Natalie, and that was Enrico Spanelli.

"I told him in September, when I returned from Switzerland. I thought it might prove useful. Well, he has been marvelously sympathetic. He never argued my religious position, but simply wrote to the United States for verification, which he got. So—we have friends in the Vatican, my dear."

Natalie, who could think only of her baby, was pleased and amazed. Aaron's youthful religious conversion might indeed bring help in an emergency. And of course it explained at last her parents' peculiarly glum attitude toward Aaron. Deep down, she felt a small involuntary stirring of disdain for him herself.

The telephone rang. "That'll be Enrico. Get the baby, dear."

At the wheel of a faded little car outside the hotel, a man wearing a clerical hat waved. "*Professore!*" The librarian priest had a face strangely like Mussolini's, but rimless glasses and a sweet, placid expression reduced the ominous resemblance. He greeted Natalie in charming Roman Italian and admired the heavily wrapped, almost invisible baby. The car started with rheumatic wheezings. "You look tired, *Professore*," he said.

"I've not slept well."

"I understand," he said kindly. "As you requested, I've made inquiries about your taking refuge in the Vatican. It's not impossible, but our freedom of action with respect to the Italian government is pathetically limited and exceptional expedients can call attention to oneself. One becomes a special case."

"The trouble is," said Aaron, "I already am one."

"True. Well, your cloudy nationality might be an advantage. If you are stateless, you are not an enemy alien." Spanelli glanced at Natalie. "I assume your embassy will provide for your niece."

"Father, pardon me," Aaron said. "Whoever gives me refuge must take her in too." The priest pursed his lips and was silent.

He parked in a rubbish-filled archway. The throng in the Piazza Venezia was surprisingly still. Flag-bearing schoolchildren huddled in front of the balcony in a docile mass, not laughing or playing pranks, just holding up their flags and fidgeting.

They went into a roped-off section, where photographers clustered with reporters, including a few Americans. Somebody produced a folding chair for Natalie. She sat holding the sleeping baby tightly, shivering. The raw wind cut through to her skin.

They waited a long time before Mussolini stepped out on the balcony and raised a hand in salute. A roar cascaded in the square: "*Duce! Duce! Duce!*" It was a strange effect, since all the people were looking up silently, with blank or hostile faces, at the tubby figure in a black-and-gold getup like an opera costume. Under the balcony a few Blackshirts, huddled around microphones, diligently manufactured the cheers. Then a tall man in the uniform of the German Foreign Service appeared on the balcony with a Japanese in a cutaway coat and high hat.

The dictator's brief speech as he declared war on America was belligerent, but the effect was somehow ridiculous. He flailed his fist when he dropped his voice, and at the most inappropriate points he grinned. While the Blackshirts cheered and shouted "*Duce!*" the crowd began to leave. Mussolini bellowed his last words at thousands of departing backs—an incredible sight—like an old ham actor scorned by the audience: "Italians, arise and be worthy of this historic hour. We shall win!" And again he smiled.

The Americans talked in low, tense tones; they were now in an enemy country. The correspondents debated whether to go to their offices to clear out their desks, or go straight to the embassy. Aaron Jastrow asked the priest to go back to the hotel so he could pick up his manuscript before going to the embassy. Natalie was too shocked to argue.

A block from the Excelsior Father Spanelli suddenly braked. Pointing to two police cars at the entrance, he said, "*Professore*, had you not better go to your embassy first? If worse comes to worst, I can get your manuscript for you."

"The embassy," Natalie said. "He's right. The embassy."

Jastrow nodded sadly.

But again, a couple of blocks from the embassy, Spanelli halted the car. A cordon of police and soldiers stood in front of the building. "Let us walk," said the priest. "You should pass through that line with no trouble, but let us see."

Jastrow turned to Natalie in the back of the car and put a comforting hand over hers. "Come, my dear. There's not much choice."

They walked up the side of the street where a small crowd of spectators was standing. There they encountered the *Times* man who had taken Natalie to the Japanese party. He was frightened and bitter; he urged them not to try to crash the cordon. The United Press correspondent had attempted it not five minutes ago. A police car had just now carried him off.

Natalie held her baby close, fighting off a feeling of sinking in black waters. "What now, Aaron?"

"We must try to go through. Or—Enrico, can we go to the Vatican now? Is there any point to that?"

The priest spread his hands. "No, no, nothing is arranged. It might be the worst of things to do. Given some time, something may be worked out. Surely not now."

"We're all in big trouble, kids," a coarse American voice back of Natalie said. "You'd better come with me." Natalie looked around into the worried, handsome, very Jewish face of Herbert Rose.

FOR a long time after that the overpowering actuality was the smell of fish in the truck that was taking them to Naples. The two drivers were Neapolitans whose business was bringing fresh fish to Rome. Rabinovitz had hired the truck to transport a part for the ship's generator; a burned-out armature had delayed the sailing. After two days of hunting for a replacement in Naples, he and Rose had finally found one in Rome. Now the Palestinian crouched on the bed of the truck beside the burlap-wrapped armature.

When Herb Rose had first brought Jastrow and Natalie to the truck, Rabinovitz had told them a story that convinced even an agonized Aaron to climb in: he had gone to the Excelsior at Herb's urging to offer Jastrow and Natalie a last chance^s to join them. In

their suite he had found two Germans waiting. Well-dressed, well-spoken men, they had invited him in, closed the door, and then questioned him about Jastrow in a tough manner. Convinced that he knew nothing, they had let him go. Obviously they were Gestapo men, Rose said, come to pick up the "blue chip."

The fish truck, a familiar sight on the highway, was a perfect cover for the fugitives. When it reached Naples, night had fallen. On its way through blacked-out streets to the waterfront, policemen repeatedly challenged the driver, but a word or two brought permission to go on. Natalie heard all this through a fog of tension and fatigue. The sense of everyday reality had left her.

The truck stopped. A sharp rapping scared her, and one of the drivers said, "Wake up, friends. We're here."

The sea breeze on the wharf was an intensely sweet relief. The vessel alongside was a shadowy shape, where shadowy people walked back and forth. It appeared no larger to Natalie than a New York sight-seeing boat.

"Come aboard," Rabinovitz said. "We'll make you comfortable."

"What's the name of this boat?" Natalie asked.

"Oh, it's had many names. Now it's the *Redeemer*. It's Turkish registry, and once you're aboard you will be secure. The harbor master and the Turkish consul have a good understanding."

Holding her baby close, Natalie said to Aaron Jastrow, "I'm beginning to feel like a Jew." She followed him up the gangway, and Rabinovitz plodded up behind them.

As Natalie set foot on the deck, the Palestinian touched her arm. "Well, relax now, Mrs. Henry. You're in Turkey. That's a start."

46

JANICE was awakened by the sound of a shower starting full force at five in the morning. She showered too, put on a housecoat, and combed her hair. In the living room, Victor Henry sat buttoned up in white and gold, reading navy correspondence by lamplight. His close-shaved face was ashen, which did not surprise her after his spending the past sixteen hours in a stupor. "Good morning, Jan," he said placidly. "Did I disturb you? Sorry."

"Morning, Dad. No, Vic often gets me up around now. Is it too early for some bacon and eggs?"

"That sounds good. Warren get back last night?"

"He did, yes." Janice wanted to tell him about the *Devilfish*, but he scared her, sitting there livid and cool in his starched uniform. He would find out soon enough. She fed the baby and started breakfast. As usual, the smell of frying bacon brought Warren out. Humming and brushing his hair, he grinned at his father, and Janice realized that he was putting on an act and would not disclose the *Devilfish* news. "Hi, Dad. How're you doing?"

"Not badly—all things considered." Pug smiled ruefully. "I seem to have slept around the clock."

"Well, travel will do that to a fellow."

"Exactly. Did I empty the bottle?"

Warren laughed. "Bone dry. But you picked a good day to sleep through. Hitler and Mussolini declared war."

"They did? They're fools, making things easier for the President. Is that the worst of it?"

"The Japs got the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*. Air attack off Singapore. Battleships versus airplanes again, Dad. The Limeys are through in this ocean now. Looks like it's all up to us."

Pug half buried his face in a hand. The *Prince of Wales*. That great ship in its splashy camouflage, he thought; those tired, gallant men, that deck where Churchill and Roosevelt had sung hymns under the guns—sunk! "The changing of the guard," he said in a low mournful tone. "Have they hit the Philippines yet?"

Warren took a moment to sip coffee. The American command in Luzon was muffling information about Clark Field that might cause panic. He still hoped the *Devilfish* report might prove wrong. "Well," he said at last, "they sort of plastered Cavite. They apparently went for shore installations."

Staring at his son, Pug said, "The *Devilfish* was alongside."

To Warren's relief, Janice called them to the table.

"What's the plan of the day, Dad?" Warren said.

"Huh? Oh, I thought I might scare up some tennis."

"Tennis? Are you serious?"

"Why not? Start getting back in shape."

"What about going down to CincPac Personnel?"

"The navy will find work for me in due course, and maybe I'd just better take what comes."

"You're dead wrong." Warren had never heard his father talk this way, and he reacted immediately and forcibly. "Why, you're entitled to the best ship command they've got left. You've already lost a day. But the navy's not going to come looking for you, Dad. You play tennis and you will end up back in War Plans."

Warren's energetic tone, so much like his own younger self, drew a smile from Pug. "Jan, hand me the CincPac roster. It's there on top of that pile of mail." He leafed through it. "Hm. Personnel—Captain Theodore Prentice Larkin, II."

"Know him?" Warren asked.

"'Jocko' Larkin? Biggest boozier in my Academy class. I pulled him out of the river once when he fell off a sailboat dead drunk."

"Dad, our squadron's got an officers' meeting at 0700. I'll drop you off at CincPac. Let's go."

At the overlook point where Janice had watched the Japanese onslaught, Warren slowed the car. Far down in the harbor, in the grayish-pink dawn light, lay the incredible picture. "Beating the Japanese now is going to be a tough battle problem," Pug said. "Especially with a bigger war on our hands in Europe."

"We ought to do it handily, with the stuff we've got building."

"Maybe. Meantime we're in for a rugged couple of years."

At the CincPac building, Warren pulled into a parking space. "Well," he said, "don't take no from Captain Larkin, now. Here, better keep the car keys, in case I leave. We were supposed to sortie yesterday."

"Right. In case you do—good luck and good hunting, Warren." And father and son, looking each other in the face, parted without more words. Victor Henry went straight to the CincPac communications office and looked through the dispatches. In the garbled report about Cavite, he saw the *Devilfish* listed as sunk.

He went to Larkin's office. It was a quarter to seven, and nobody was there. Pug unceremoniously took a lounge chair in the inner office; Larkin would have done the same in an office of his. He felt ill: nauseated, chilly, yet perspiring. The brandy had done this; but

after the letters from Rhoda and Madeline, the only safe recourse had been oblivion. The *Devilfish* news had struck an almost numb man. As soon as he had heard of the Cavite attack, he had half expected evil tidings about his son. When things went bad, his experience told him, they went very bad; and he seemed to be falling into a gulf of bad luck without a bottom.

The main thing now was to hold himself together. He did not know, after all, whether or not Byron was dead or injured. Excited first reports were not reliable. The straight word was not yet in.

On his wife and his daughter, however, the straight word was in. Their letters had given it to him. Rhoda wanted to divorce him and marry Palmer Kirby; Madeline had entangled herself with her employer, had probably been committing adultery, and it might be in the newspapers any day. These were facts. He had to absorb them and somehow act on them.

Far from feeling relief that he might be free for Pamela, Pug now fully understood what a strong bond tied him to his wife. That Rhoda did not feel this too—that she could write such a letter in her usual breezy style, blaming herself and her long dislike of a navy wife's existence, praising Pug almost as a saint, yet telling him that she wanted another man—this was a stab from which it would be difficult to recover. Exactly what had been going on between her and Kirby, Pug did not know. He clung to the fact that Rhoda hadn't spelled it out.

Because what Victor Henry now wanted was to get her back. She was half of him, for better or worse; she was irreplaceable, beautiful, desirable, and above all capable of surprising him. It had taken a nasty shock to drive these truths home. He would have to court this woman again! He could not blame her; nor, strangely, did he have strong feelings about Palmer Kirby. The thing had happened to those two people much as it had to him and Pamela; only Rhoda had gone over the edge.

Rage at Madeline's boss perhaps did him some good. One reason for surmounting this crisis was to confront Hugh Cleveland, whose wife was threatening to sue him for divorce, naming his twenty-two-year old assistant—falsely, Madeline swore, in a long vehement paragraph, but that was hard to swallow. Regret cut

at Pug for his softness in letting her stay in New York. What could have been more predictable for a girl adrift, alone?

"Pug! I tried all yesterday afternoon to find you. Where the hell were you hiding!" Jocko Larkin came striding in, a red-faced fat four-striper. He sat down in his swivel chair and surveyed his classmate with a penetrating eye. "That's hell about the *California*, Pug. She'd have had a great skipper. Who gave you my message? I left it at a half a dozen places."

"What message? Nobody. I came to see you about orders."

"That's what I wanted to see *you* about," Larkin said. "Admiral Kimmel is going to be relieved. At his own request. His successor will be Admiral Pye—for how long we don't know, but Pye wants to start shaking up the staff. He wants you for operations—now hold it, Pug." Larkin held up a hand as Victor Henry violently shook his head. "This is a great break. Remember there are four *Iowa* class battleships building now. The greatest warships in the world. You'll probably get one after this."

"Jocko, give me a ship. Now. Not in a couple of years."

"Listen to me, Pug. *You don't say no to CincPac!*"

"Where's Admiral Pye's office?" Henry stood up.

"Sit down!" Larkin rose too, glaring at him.

"Do I get a ship?"

"*Sit down.*" Pug sat. "You look green, Pug. Is everything okay?"

"I drank too much brandy last night."

"You did? *You?*"

"I didn't like losing the *California*."

"I see. How's Rhoda?"

"Just fine." Victor Henry thought he brought the words out calmly, but Larkin raised his eyebrows.

"Let's see. You have a boy on the *Enterprise*. Is he all right?"

"Fine. I have a submariner, too. He's on the *Devilfish*. Or was."

"The *Devilfish*, eh?" Larkin's calm tone was very forced. He opened a folder on his desk. "The *Northampton* might be available. I say *might*. Most likely not."

"The *Northampton*? God love you, Jocko."

"Pug, a cruiser command doesn't compare with CincPac's deputy chief for operations. You know that!"

"Jocko, I've shuffled all the high-strategy paper I ever want to. For nearly seven years I've been doing that. I'm not bucking for promotion. I'm a sailor and a gunner, and there's a war on. If you can't find me anything else, I'll take a squadron of mine-sweepers. Okay? *I want to go to sea.*"

"I hear you, loud and clear." Heaving a sigh, Larkin said, "One more flap I'll have with the admiral, that's all."

"I want him to know this is my doing. Where is he?"

"Listen, Pug, if you talk to the admiral the way you've been talking to me, you'll get sent to the States on a medical. You look like death warmed over, and you're acting shell-shocked. I'll see what I can do. Get some sleep, and whatever's bothering you, put it on ice. I'll try to find something."

"Thanks, Jocko. If you want to call me, I'll be at my son's house." He gave Larkin the number.

As they shook hands, Captain Larkin said with odd softness, "When you write Rhoda, give her my love."

Naval Officers Club, Pearl Harbor
12 December, 1941

Dear Rhoda:

I'm somewhat stymied by the problem of answering your astounding letter. I'm not sure I can set my feelings on paper, not being very good at that sort of thing, at best. If I really believed this move would make you happy, maybe I could endure it better. However, it strikes me as a calamity for you as well as for me.

I know I'm no Don Juan, but taking the rough with the smooth, you and I have made it this far. I still love you—and in your letter you've managed to say a few kind things about me.

I'm compelled to believe that you're "lovesick as a schoolgirl," and can't help it, and all that part. I guess these things will happen. Still, you're not a schoolgirl—and getting used to anybody new at our age is a very hard job.

The life we've been leading in recent years has put a strain on our marriage. I've felt that too. In Manila I said to Byron that we've become a family of tumbleweeds, and lately the winds of war have been blowing us all around the world. Right now it strikes me that those same winds are starting to flatten civilization. All the more reason for us to hang on to what we have—mainly each other,

and our family—and to love each other to the end. That's the way I've worked it out. I hope that on further thought you will, too.

I'll probably be at sea for most of the next year or two; so I can't make the immediate effort to mend matters that seems urgently called for. Here's how I'm compelled to leave it. I'm ready to forget—or try to—that you ever wrote the letter; or to talk it over with you on my next Stateside leave; or, if you're absolutely certain you want to go ahead with it, to sign the papers and do what you wish. But I'll put up a helluva fight first about that. I have no intention of simply letting you go. I want two things, Rhoda: first, your happiness; second, if possible, that we go on together.

We're fortunate in our sons. I know they're facing hazards, but the whole world's in hazard, and at least my boys are serving. I can't ask for more. I don't know what went wrong with Madeline. I'm sick about it. If the fellow marries her, that may at least clean the mess up somewhat. If he doesn't, he'll be hearing from me.

I'm a family man, and a one-woman man, Rhoda. Maybe I'm a kind of fossil, but I can only act by my lights. My impression is that Palmer Kirby—despite what's happened—is the same sort of fellow. If I'm right about that, this thing will not work out for you in the long run. That's as honest a judgment as I can give you.

Victor is a handsome baby, and our other grandson looks unbelievably like Briny as an infant. I'm enclosing a snapshot I picked up in Moscow from Natalie's old friend Slote. I hate to part with it, but you'll want to see it, I know. Let's hope to God they got safely out of Italy before Mussolini declared war.

Jocko Larkin sends his love—he's fat and sleek. That's about it. Now I'm going to start earning my salary by fighting a war.

Love,
Pug

It was nearly lunchtime when Victor Henry finished writing this letter at the officers' club. He got up and dropped it in the club mailbox, and ran into Jocko Larkin coming in with three younger officers. Larkin sent them on in to get a table and said to Pug, "I've been trying to find you. Do you know about the *Devilfish*?"

"No." Pug's heart thumped heavily. "What?"

"Well, it was the *Sealion* that was sunk at Cavite. The *Devilfish* was undamaged."

Pug had to clear his throat twice. "That's definite?"

"Couldn't be more so."

"I see. I'm sorry about the *Sealion*, but—thanks."

"The thing we talked about, Pug—I'm trying, but that looks like a pipe dream. I'll keep scratching around. Join us for lunch."

"Another time, Jocko. Thanks."

Pug went out of the club into the sunshine. A stone had rolled off his heart; Byron was all right! And one way or another, Jocko would get him out to sea. Strolling aimlessly through the navy yard, he arrived at the waterfront. There alongside the fuel dock, taking on oil, ammunition, and food, was the *Northampton*. He thought of mounting the gangway and having a look around. But what for? She was a handsome vessel, he thought, but a half-breed, spawned by politics. The Washington Treaty had bound the United States back in 1922 to limit its cruisers to less than ten thousand tons. There had been no limit on length. These hybrids were the result—overblown destroyers, with the length of battle-ships, but a quarter their weight. After the *California*, the *Northampton* was a shrunken affair.

Still, Pug thought, he would have been glad enough to get her. It was exciting to see her loading stores for a combat mission. Jocko was right, operations was the inside track. But, for the good of his soul right now, Pug needed the *Northampton* himself.

He drove back to the house. On the desk in his room, clipped to a wrinkled Western Union cable, was a handwritten note:

Dear Dad,

I'm at the Gillettes. Will be home for dinner. Warren phoned. They sortie at dawn. Yeoman from *California* delivered the attached. Says it's been kicking around for days.

Love, Janice

He opened the cable.

DEAREST JUST THIS INSTANT HEARD OF JAPANESE ATTACK AM UTTERLY HORRIFIED FRIGHTFULLY WORRIED ABOUT YOU DESPERATELY ASHAMED IDIOTIC LETTER FORGET IT PLEASE PLEASE AND FORGIVE CABLE ME YOU'RE SAFE AND WELL LOVE RHO

Rhoda to the life! He could hear her telephoning it: "UTTERLY horrified, FRIGHTFULLY worried . . ." He knew Rhoda's bursts of contrition. She was never so sweet as immediately after some bad behavior. Her impulse in sending the cable might well have been sincere. But the process of repair would be long, if indeed it was beginning. He did not know what to reply, so he tossed the cable into the desk drawer, beside the letter for which it apologized.

That night after dinner Pug went straight to bed. At four in the morning he snapped wide-awake, and it occurred to him that he might as well watch the sortie of the *Enterprise*. He dressed quietly and drove to the overlook point.

The darkness was merciful to Pearl Harbor. But soon the dawn brightened, and the hideous shame was unveiled once more. Victor Henry turned his face away from it, back to the indigo arch of the sky, where Venus and the brightest stars still burned. The familiar religious awe came over him, the sense of a Presence above this pitiful little earth. He could almost picture God the Father looking down with sad wonder. In a world so rich and lovely, could His children find nothing better to do than to dig iron from the ground and work it into grotesque engines for blowing each other up? Yet this madness was the way of the world. He, Pug Henry, had given all his working years to it. Now he was about to risk his very life at it. Why?

Because with all its rotten spots, the United States of America was not only his homeland but the hope of the world. Because if America's enemies dug up iron and made deadly engines of it, America had to do the same, and do it better, or die. So Victor Henry meditated as the *Enterprise* moved down channel and out to sea under the escort of destroyers and cruisers, taking his first-born son into the war.

Back at the house, he found Janice all dressed. "Hi," he said. "I thought you'd still be asleep."

"Oh, it's Vic's cough. It hangs on and on. I'm taking him to the clinic at the base for a checkup. You just missed a call from Captain Larkin."

"Jocko? This early?"

"Yes. He said to tell you, 'She's all yours.'"

Victor Henry dropped in a chair with a blankly startled look. "She's all yours? That's the whole message?"

"He said you'd understand. Good news, I hope?"

"Pretty fair, yes. Look, Jan, you'll be passing by Western Union. Can you send Rhoda a cable for me?"

"Sure."

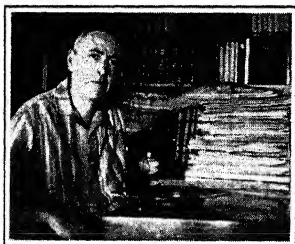
Victor Henry reached for the memo pad by the telephone and scrawled, "Letter coming am fine have just begun to fight." Janice curved her mouth in an indulgent female grin.

"What's the matter with that?" Pug said.

"How about *'Love'*?"

"By all means. Thanks, Jan. You add that."

When she left with the baby, he was on the telephone, trying to reach Commander, Cruisers Pacific. He responded to her farewell wave with a bleak, preoccupied smile. Janice thought, closing the door on him, that nothing could be more like her austere, remote father-in-law than the little business of the cable. You had to remind this man that he loved his wife.



Herman Wouk

an appreciation by

Rear Admiral Daniel V. Gallery

U. S. Navy (Retired)

I first met Herman Wouk twenty-one years ago through *The Caine Mutiny*. At that time I commanded our carrier task group in the Medi-

terranean. I started reading *Mutiny* at five o'clock one afternoon and finished it about five the next morning. I then wrote to Wouk, whom I had never met, saying I thought it was a great book.

Most naval officers took a dim view of *Mutiny*. The *Caine* sailed most of the time in the backwaters of the fleet, and her skipper, Captain Queeg, was an odd and in some ways pitiable character. From my enthusiasm for the book began a lasting friendship with the author. A year later, while I was in command of a hunter-

killer group in the Atlantic Fleet, I invited Wouk to make a week's cruise with me in my flagship. I soon found that he is more than just a talented writer: he is also a stimulating companion and a conscientious Orthodox Jew. One of the first things he explained to me when he came aboard was that he could not eat the regular food of my flag mess. So we prepared kosher food for him.

Later on, when the dress rehearsal of his play, *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*, fell on a Saturday, it had to be held without Wouk; the Sabbath is a holy day of worship for him. These strong religious convictions he has explained movingly in his only book of nonfiction, *This Is My God*.

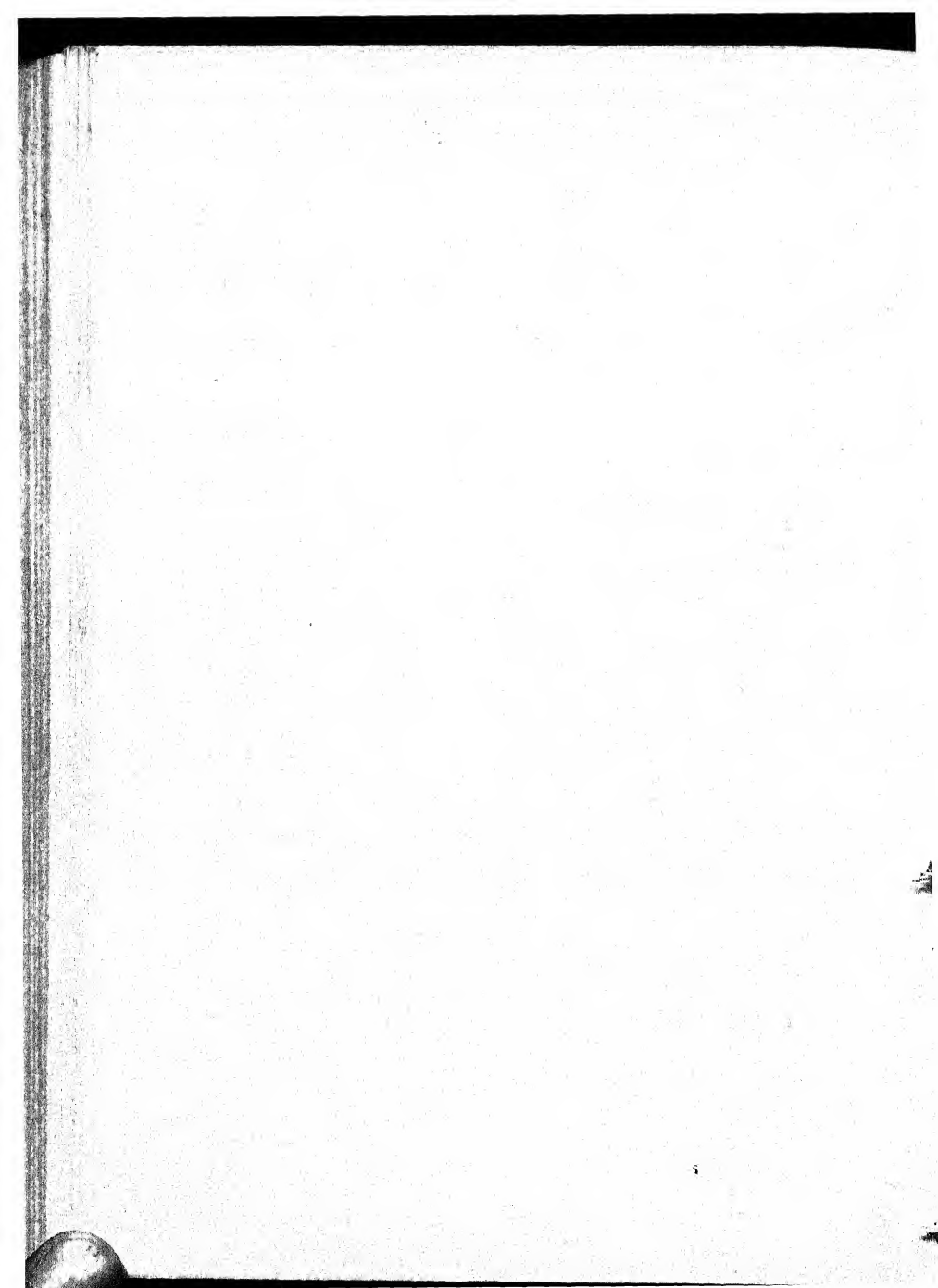
He was born fifty-six years ago to immigrant parents in the Bronx, and from boyhood onward he wanted to be a writer. After graduating from Columbia University, he worked as a gag writer for the great radio comedian Fred Allen until the outbreak of World War II, in which he served for three years as a deck officer aboard a destroyer in the Pacific. After the war he published two moderately successful novels and then, in 1951, *The Caine Mutiny*, which won a Pulitzer Prize and catapulted its author to instant fame. All his subsequent novels have been successes.

Although Wouk has written on a wide variety of themes, he has never lost his interest in the navy. Now he has published this monumental historical novel about World War II, in which the hero, Victor Henry, is a professional naval officer. It is, says Wouk, "the book I've been aiming toward and planning for twenty years."

The regular navy will like this book better than it did *The Caine Mutiny*. The action takes place at much higher echelons of the service, and Victor Henry is a competent, dedicated officer. The general public will like it every bit as much. It is history told by a master storyteller who never loses sight of the plain people caught up in the winds of every war.

Mr. Wouk presently lives in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C., with his wife, Betty Sarah, and two sons, Nathaniel, twenty-one, a junior at Princeton, and Joseph, seventeen, a freshman at Columbia. *The Winds of War* is dedicated to them.

The Winds of War is the fifth novel by Herman Wouk to appear in Reader's Digest Condensed Books. The others were *The City Boy*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *Marjorie Morningstar*, and *Youngblood Hawke*.





The Runaways

Wanted by the police:
Samuel Miles, age fifteen, fair hair,
height five feet two inches ...
also an escaped cheetah named Yarra

A CONDENSATION OF THE BOOK BY

VICTOR CANNING

ILLUSTRATED BY THOMAS BEECHAM

Smiler's first reaction was one of stark terror when he discovered he was sharing his hideout with a full-grown female cheetah. But once he had attended to his personal safety, the fifteen-year-old fugitive from a reform school began to have conflicting feelings about the big cat. On the one hand a dangerous animal should be reported to the authorities. On the other, she was a runaway like him. . . .

This story of a "wanted" boy at large in the English countryside, and of the animal for whom he comes to feel a responsibility, is an unusual mixture of detective-story suspense, quiet humor and first-class nature writing. It involves some highly original characters, from the resourceful poacher who, like Smiler, had "never done anything really bad," to the eccentric lady dog breeder who believed that young people should be left to solve their own problems. How right she was in Smiler's case, readers of this thoroughly engaging book will enjoy finding out.

IT HAD been raining all night, and all the morning; raining hard all over Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire. It was a cold February rain that spouted over blocked gutters and flooded the low-lying roads so that passing cars sent up bow waves of spray. Now, at half past eleven precisely, as Smiler was being driven in a police car under the escort of two burly patrolmen, a thunderstorm was brewing overhead. At first it was a few little murmurs, slowly rising to a full-scale roll and rumble. Suddenly there came a great stabbing sword thrust of lightning that turned the whole world into a dazzle of light.

Smiler jumped in his seat and cried, "Blimey!"

The policeman alongside him smiled. "Nothing to be scared of, son. Just think—if we hadn't picked you up, you'd be soaked even more." He glanced at a pile of wet clothes on the floor of the car and then at the blanket-wrapped figure of Smiler.

It was a red-and-yellow blanket and all that could be seen of Smiler was his head sticking out of the top, his fair hair still wet. Smiler—real name Samuel Miles—was fifteen, tallish and well built, with a friendly square face, a pressed-in smudge of a nose, and a pair of angelic blue eyes that made him look as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He had escaped two weeks before from a reform school, and had been picked up that morning by the police. He had been caught because of a tip from a farmer in whose barn

he had been hiding (and whose hens' eggs he had been eating, sucking them raw).

Smiler wasn't scared. It took quite a lot to scare Smiler. The lightning had just made him jump, and he didn't much like it, that was all. There were a number of things Smiler didn't like—school, for instance. Particularly he didn't like reform school, and he had run away from it after exactly thirteen days' and four hours' residence. He didn't much care for the country either. He preferred towns, where there were more opportunities for picking up the odds and ends that made living tolerable.

After all, when you were mostly on your own, you had to have a bit of money in your pocket and be able to go to the movies now and then and treat yourself to a Coke in a café when you felt like company. Smiler didn't like being idle; he liked doing things. The trouble was that people made such a fuss about some of the things he did—like pinching a bottle of milk from a doorstep or lifting a comic book from a shop.

Most of all, Smiler didn't like the long periods when his father, a ship's cook, went off to sea. Then, instead of living in lodgings with his father and having a wonderful time, he was dumped with sister Ethel and her husband, Albert. They were all right, but they fussed about their house and their furniture and grumbled when his hands marked the paintwork.

The driver grinned at Smiler's reflection in the mirror. "You look like a red Indian in that blanket. Chief Sitting Bull."

At that moment there was a tremendous clap of thunder and two hundred yards ahead a streak of lightning flared earthward. It seared into the branches of a tree, wreathed its way down the trunk and hit the ground with a crack that shook the earth. A great branch crashed across the road. The police car skidded to a halt twenty yards from the obstruction. A car coming the other way was not so lucky and it slued sideways into the branch.

The two policemen jumped out of the patrol car and dashed through the rain to give assistance. It took them three or four minutes to climb over the branch and assure themselves that the other driver was in no great distress. It took the driver of the patrol car another few minutes to get back so that he could radio

headquarters to report the road blockage and summon help. As he sent out the call he knew that he would also have to report the escape from custody of one Samuel Miles. In the car mirror the policeman could see the back seat. The only evidence that Smiler had ever sat there was a damp patch on the leather.

Smiler at that moment was running up the side of a plowed field, with his clothes gathered in the blanket. As he pelted toward a crest of woodland, which he could just glimpse through the driving rain, he was smiling because he was free. This time he meant to stay free. Just what he would do with his freedom he didn't know—except that he was going to enjoy it until his father got back from sea. His father would quickly clear up the misunderstanding that had sent him off to reform school.

Meanwhile the second policeman had returned to the car. He took one look at the back seat and said, "He's gone?"

"With our blanket," said the other. "Do we go after him?"

"In this weather? Not likely. He won't get far when the call goes out for him." The policeman grinned and said jokingly, "Wanted: Chief Sitting Bull. Height five feet two inches, fair-haired, blue-eyed, age fifteen plus, wearing a red-and-yellow blanket. Approach with caution. This man is dangerous." He paused, then added, "Wanted person's face is heavily freckled."

As Smiler reached the cover of the woods, he crashed into the undergrowth like a rocket and put up a couple of pheasants, who flew away, honking and screeching. The noise so startled him that he slipped and fell flat on his face. While he lay there, getting his breath back, he gave himself a talking-to. Smiler was a great one for lecturing himself in moments of crisis.

"Samuel M.," he said (Smiler was other people's name for him and he didn't much care for it), "you got to think this out. You're wet and hungry and half naked. You are wanted by the police like a real criminal, which you aren't. It was never you that took the old lady's handbag. Thing Number One, then. You got to get warmed up, fed and into hiding. Thing Number Two. You'd better get them wet clothes on. Wearing a colored blanket is going to make you stand out like a circus Indian."

So Smiler got to his feet and struggled into his wet blue jeans.

As he did so there was a bellow of thunder away to the west and the whole sky was lit with another blaze of lightning. Though Smiler could not know it, this lightning was doing exactly the same for another prisoner as the previous bolt had done for him.

TEN miles away, a little southwest of the Wiltshire town of Warminster, was Longleat, the large country estate of the Marquis of Bath. Part of its park had been turned into a wild-animal reserve. Nearly every day of the year cars brought tourists to see the lions of Longleat and the other animals which were kept in huge, penned-in stretches of the parkland.

The road ran first through the East African section, which held giraffes, zebras, ostriches and antelopes; and then on through the monkey jungle, with its baboons that often cadged free rides on top of the cars; and so into the lion reserve, where the kingly beasts sometimes lay lazily across the roadway refusing to move out of the way. Finally the cars entered the cheetah area.

On this stormy February day there were no more than three or four cars in the reserve. In fact, there were few animals to be seen. The baboons were in their dugouts and the lions in their wooden pens. In the cheetah area all the cheetahs were sheltering in their huts—all except one.

Her name was Yarra. (All the cheetahs had names: Apollo, Chester, Lotus, Tina, Schultz.) Yarra was a full-grown female. She stood nearly three feet high to her narrow, raking shoulders; and from the point of her black nose to the tip of her long tufted tail she measured seven feet and one inch. She was a magnificent animal. Under the rain the spots on her tawny orange coat were as black as wet coals. The dark lines of her face mask, running from inside the eyes down around her muzzle, were boldly drawn charcoal. Her throat and underbelly were creamy white, and her eyes tawny gold.

When the cheetah warden came into the enclosure in his Land Rover, Yarra could jump in one easy long-flowing movement to the top of the cab. Sometimes, to give the cheetahs exercise, the warden trailed a piece of meat from the back of the Land Rover for them to chase. Even when he accelerated to forty miles an

hour, Yarra could easily keep up with the car. If he had gone at sixty, she could have held pace for a while.

Today Yarra was strangely restless. It was not the restlessness that overcame her when her keen sight marked the movement of guinea fowl, pheasant or young deer on the free slopes outside the enclosure; then she would race to the wire fence, longing for the freedom of the hunt and the chase. Yarra did not know what had made her restless, but where normally she would have taken shelter from the rain, she now found herself stalking up and down the long boundary fence. Made of strong two-inch mesh, the fence was over twelve feet high; it was supported on strong wooden poles, with here and there a concrete pillar for added strength. Inside it was another fence, about four feet high, which the cheetahs could have jumped easily, but they never bothered.

There was a low rumble of thunder, and a stronger burst of rain slashed into Yarra's face. She sat down on her haunches close to the inner fence, shook her head and blinked against the rain.

It was at this moment, as Smiler was pulling on his wet jeans ten miles away, that the sky above burst with an earthshaking roar of thunder. A great bolt of lightning was loosed through the low-hanging clouds, hitting the outer fence of the cheetah enclosure a few yards from Yarra. The lightning found the metal bolts in a concrete support, and fence and support were ripped from the ground. The falling top half of the support flattened the low inner fence just by Yarra. She leaped, snarling with fright, into the air and came down on top of the collapsed section of the outer fence. As thunder rolled angrily again she was gone. Impelled by fear and shock, she streaked away up the long grass slope outside the enclosure toward a wood at the top.

It was less than twenty minutes before the cheetah warden in his Land Rover discovered that Yarra was gone. He immediately began to organize a search party. By then Yarra was three miles away, beyond the wood, moving slowly down the lee of a small apple orchard. The land dropped steeply below her. A mile away she could see a road with cars speeding along it.

Yarra watched the road for a while, and then began to work a line across country parallel to it.

IF THERE WAS AN INSTINCT in Yarra to keep away from roads and people, there was the same instinct in Smiler. Dressed now in his clothes, he trotted along the downlands that ran away from the wood, being careful to keep below the crests of ridges. He had no idea where he was; all he knew was that the policemen had been taking him to Salisbury.

He traveled like this for two hours and never did it stop raining. The rain soaked into his thick tweed jacket so that it became a sodden weight. His wet jeans rubbed the insides of his thighs. The water ran down his fair hair, plastering it to his head like thickly spread butter. He was hungry, and beautiful pictures of steaming sausages, hamburgers and golden potato chips floated before his eyes until he gave himself a smart talking-to: "Samuel M., keep your eyes open for danger, not for food." At the same time he knew he must find shelter for the coming night.

He crossed several roads, hiding first in the hedges and then darting across. Now and then he would sing quietly to cheer himself up—songs he sang when his father played his mouth organ. Sometimes when his father was home they would go out on Ethel and Albert's bicycles and freewheel down hills, both singing madly. Once or twice his father had hired a car and taken him out, and when they were on some quiet road had let him learn to drive.

He was trotting up a river valley, the stream heavy with flood-water to his right, when he saw ahead of him a gray stone bridge. Cautiously he moved out onto it; there was no one in sight. On the far side, set a little back from the water's edge, was a long, low thatched cottage. A board on the garden gate read FORD COTTAGE. Behind the cottage stood a barn.

Smiler eyed the cottage for some time. There was no smoke coming out of the chimneys, and the curtains at all the front windows were drawn. He whistled quietly, speculatively, to himself and then trotted up the road to the yard entrance. Beyond a big five-barred gate, which was padlocked, was a courtyard with a well in the middle, and beyond that the barn with an open car bay at one end. Beside the big gate was a small side gate which was not locked. Smiler went in and walked around the house and barn, peering through the chinks in the drawn curtains and going right

into the barn and up the wooden ladder to the hay-filled loft. There were no signs of life, and no recent car tracks on the soft mud at the entrance to the car bay. At the back of the car bay was an old bicycle.

It wasn't difficult for Smiler to get into the house. In his hometown there were certain boys who knew the ways of householders with their keys. Nearly everyone, when he went away, locked the front door and took the key with him, and nearly everyone locked the back door and hid the key where the person who came to keep an eye on things could find it. The back-door key of Ford Cottage was tucked away on a porch rafter.

The door opened directly into a large kitchen. Smiler went in and closed the door behind him. It was a nice kitchen, though now a bit gloomy with the curtains drawn. Smiler flicked the light switch by the door. The center kitchen light came on. Smiler flicked the light off. He went to the sink and turned the cold tap. Water ran from it.

Five minutes later Smiler was out of the cottage (the back door locked and the key returned to its place) and up in the hay-loft of the barn. He had with him two cans of sardines, a package of crackers and a large bottle of hard cider. The whole lot he carried in a thick car blanket which he had found in the little hall outside the kitchen.

Smiler picked a spot on the hay bales where he could lie and watch the yard through a dusty, cobwebbed little window. Methodically he stripped off his clothes and spread them over the bales to dry. Then he wrapped himself in the car blanket and began to attend to the inner man. Within fifteen minutes he had eaten all the sardines and most of the crackers, and had considerably punished the contents of the bottle of cider. Almost immediately he began to regret the cider because it started to make his head spin. He flicked his eyelids up and down to clear his vision so that he could watch the yard. But it was no good. The last thing he remembered before slumping to sleep was giving himself a good talking-to: "Samuel M., my lad, you wolfed your food and swigged your cider like a glutton. If you don't end up being sick, it'll be a miracle."

WHILE SMILER WAS SNORING on his hay bales in the loft, Yarra was about a mile and a half away on the far side of the valley. Her restlessness was still with her and she was also hungry. It was between five and six o'clock in the evening, which was past the cheetahs' normal feeding time. More significantly, this was a Tuesday, which meant that Yarra hadn't eaten since Sunday. In their wild state the big cats hunted and then ate, and hunted again only when hunger returned. To have fed them regularly every day would have dulled their appetites and, in the end, injured their health. So, each Monday, the big cats at Longleat were starved.

Moving along the grass headland at the side of a fenced-in pasture, Yarra caught the quick movement of something white. Immediately she froze in her tracks, her right foreleg poised in midair. Beyond the fence was a large wooden chicken house, and scattered around it was a flock of White Leghorn fowls.

Yarra watched them and rich saliva rose to her mouth. She stretched her jaws silently and then dropped low. For all her bulk Yarra moved under the bottom strand of the wire fence like a silent flow of molten gold. Fifty yards away she marked the nearest straggler from the flock, a cockbird with a white, cockaded tail and wattles of shining vermillion. Although she had been captured as a well-grown cub, and had never done much hunting for herself, she moved now as surely as though she had spent all her time in the wilds where she was born.

She was twenty yards from the bird when it saw her. Its head turned with a jerk, and Yarra streaked across the winter-pale grass in two running leaps. The cock screamed in alarm and jumped high, wings slashing the air. Yarra took the bird three feet from the ground, her jaws closing over its lower neck, breaking the vertebrae. A great white explosion of feathers sprayed into the drizzle-soft wind. There was a noisy gust of alarm from the other fowls as they scooted for the hen house.

Yarra, holding her prey high, raced back to the wire fence and cleared it with an easy spring. She found a hollow ringed by gorse and broom bushes and, crouching down, began to eat. When she had finished there were left only the wings, the once boldly arched tail and the stout yellow legs of the proud cock.

Yarra groomed and cleaned herself, then lay for a while on her side, contented.

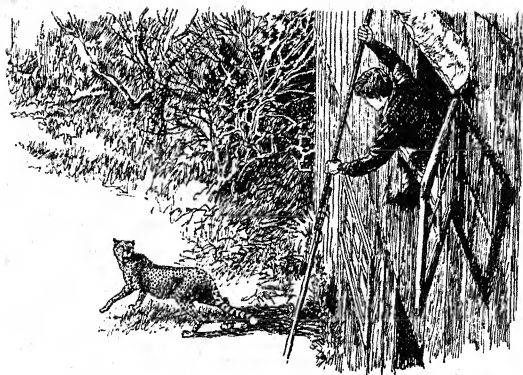
The rain stopped and the wind began to clear the clouds from the evening sky so that a few early stars showed thinly. Yarra rose, her unnameable restlessness back with her. But this time there was habit with it, too. Each night in the reserve Yarra, with all the other cheetahs, was herded by the warden in his Land Rover into the night pen at the bottom of the enclosure. Night was coming fast now and Yarra moved on to find shelter.

Half an hour later, the dusk thickening, she came down a valley-side and up onto a high bank above a main road. A car went by, but Yarra was used to cars and its movement did not alarm her. She dropped down the bank on bunched feet and was across the main road like a shadow. On the far side a minor road ran down toward the river. Three-quarters of a mile away Smiler was groaning and holding his head, knowing that within the next few minutes he was going to be violently sick.

Yarra padded down the road, flicking a front paw now and then with irritation because the ground was running with water from the overflow of a small ditch at one side. At the bottom of the lane she crossed over a stone bridge and stopped just short of a white padlocked gate, which was the barn entrance to Ford Cottage. Although it was almost dark she could see the barn across the yard, with an open doorway cut in its lower weatherboarding. The doorway reminded her of the entrance to her sleeping hut at Longleat. She took one long leap, high over the five-barred gate, and then padded toward the barn.

She was almost at the old wellhead when a figure came through the open barn door. Yarra froze. The figure turned along the side of the barn with a curious stumbling movement and disappeared. Yarra knew it was a tallish human being, one to be treated with respect. It was the very small human beings that roused the killing instinct in her and her kind, the children who looked through the windows of the cars going around the park. To her they were small game to be hunted, like young deer.

She waited for a while to see if the figure would return. After a time she moved slowly across to the barn door.



Two

SMILER had been sick in a little orchard behind the barn. He felt better, but his head still ached and his stomach was queasy and tender. He walked down a small path to the edge of the river, where he knelt and splashed water over his face and head.

Five minutes later he went back to the barn. The ladder that led to the loft was just inside the door. Beyond it the floor of the barn ran back in darkness for about thirty feet. His head still dizzy and throbbing, Smiler turned through the door and groped for the ladder rungs. He did not hear the sudden movement of an alarmed Yarra. She rose to her feet, jaws open, her face mask wrinkled with fear and anger, and gave a spitting hiss of warning—which also went unheard by Smiler as he climbed the steps. He reached the top and dropped the trapdoor with a thump.

Yarra settled again in the straw litter, flat on her side, her head thrown back. She was tired, and she was disturbed by the restlessness in her. She sensed a slight irritation in the dugs along her belly. Her belly itself felt strange and slightly swollen. What Yarra didn't know, and what her cheetah warden would have been delighted to know, was that she was going to have cubs. The father had been Apollo and the mating had taken place thirty days previously. In about sixty days' time Yarra was due to litter. Cheetahs seldom breed in captivity and those at Longleat had

shown no signs of doing so—which was perhaps why Yarra's condition had gone unnoticed.

Slowly, her restlessness fading, Yarra dropped away into sleep. Above her, in a nest of hay, Smiler slept too, snoring gently.

Just before first light Yarra woke and left the barn. She went through the orchard and down to the river, where she crouched and drank. Then she moved slowly up the narrow footpath that fishermen used in the trout season. A hundred yards from Ford Cottage an unwary moorhen got up from a dead patch of reeds almost under Yarra's nose. She took it with one swift pounce.

An hour later Smiler woke, warm and dry and feeling better. He lay back on the hay, looking out of the dusty window, thinking. Since it was impossible for him to work out any grand plan for the future, he had to be content with a short-term view. He must keep out of sight as much as possible and have a base which would give him shelter, warmth, food and drink. Ford Cottage seemed a good base if it were going to be empty for some time. The deep freezer and the food cupboards were well stocked, as he knew. That he would be using someone else's house and supplies didn't worry him very much. After all, he thought, if he had owned the house and there was a young chap like himself on the run—because everyone had gotten everything wrong—he wouldn't have minded if that young chap had helped himself. Thing Number One, then, was to find out if the cottage was really unoccupied and, if possible, for how long it might stay that way.

So from his barn window Smiler watched the cottage all that morning. The only person who came to the house was a postman who pushed some letters through the back-door slot. For lunch Smiler ate the remaining crackers and drank a little cider.

An hour later he had a shock. An elderly man came walking down the road, stopped at the courtyard gate and looked across to the barn. Smiler saw him shake his head and then come through the side gate and cross to the barn. He heard the open barn door being banged-to on its catch. His heart beating fast, he saw with relief the man moving back across the yard to the lane. Smiler gave himself a black mark for carelessness. The door had originally

The Runaways

been closed and he had left it open. The elderly man had closed it, so he must know there was no one in the cottage. After all, you didn't go around shutting a friend's barn door if you knew the friend would be back, say, that evening.

Some time after the man had gone Smiler left the barn—closing the door after him—and slipped across to the back door, which he opened with the key. In the kitchen he picked up the mail from a basket that hung under the mail slot. There were two letters addressed to a Major H. E. Collingwood, Ford Cottage, Crockerton, and a picture postcard addressed to Mrs. B. Bagnall at the cottage. The picture was a view of Mont Blanc and the message on the card cheered Smiler up a lot.

Dear Mrs. B.

I am happy to say Mrs. Collingwood is much improved, though it will be a good month yet before the medico will be able to give her a clean bill of health.

When you next come in will you please check the level of the central-heating oil tank?

Kind regards to you, Mr. B. and family.

Sincerely,
H. E. Collingwood

So, thought Smiler, the major and his wife are away for quite a time. All he had to do was to keep a weather eye open for Mrs. Bagnall. Considerably perked up, he put the mail back in the basket, then made a quick tour of the cottage, promising himself a more detailed one later. This done, he slipped out of the back door and over to his barn, closing the door after him.

He took with him—strictly on loan—a transistor radio which he had found in the major's study. The inside of his shirt was pouched with a can of corned beef, a package of crackers and a bottle of orangeade. While he ate he turned the radio on very softly.

Before it got really dark Smiler gathered up the empty sardine cans and other rubbish and, clasping them to his breast, went down the ladder frontward, without using his hands. He jerked the door catch up with one shoulder and slipped out. Because he was only going a few yards to the river he left the door open.

YARRA CAME WRAITHLIKE through the gloom at the top of the garden. She saw Smiler tossing his rubbish into the river, but she moved on without any great interest in him. Had she been hungry and in a bad temper, just the sight of him might have stirred resentment, but she was well fed and wanted only the comfort of warm straw. She had passed most of the day in the river woods, moving away whenever she had heard voices or sounds that disturbed her. Coming out of the woods in the late afternoon, she had put up a hare from a clump of dead bracken. The hare had had fifteen yards start on her but, although it had twisted, zig-zagged and doubled back at top speed, she had moved like an orange-gold blur and easily taken it within a hundred yards. She had eaten it, relishing the meat which was strange to her.

Now she passed around the barn and through the open door to drop onto her litter of straw. A few moments later Smiler came in, humming softly to himself. Momentarily Yarra's mask wrinkled and she opened her jaws, but there was no real malice in her.

Smiler closed the door, felt for the ladder rungs in the darkness and went up to his loft. Before going to sleep he listened to the radio, eager to hear whether there would be anything about his escape in the news. He was disappointed; however, there was something about another escape. A cheetah which had escaped from Longleat the day before had not so far been found. Anyone seeing the animal was asked to keep well away from it and to inform the police or the Longleat Park authorities. There was an interview with a man from Longleat Park who gave some general information about cheetahs and mentioned that the escaped one was a female named Yarra.

Smiler lay comfortably in the hay, thinking about the cheetah. From his sister's home at Fishponds, on the outskirts of Bristol, he'd often gone to the Bristol zoo, but he couldn't remember seeing a cheetah there. Actually he didn't care much for zoos. Pacing up and down a cage was no way to live. Being at a reform school was a bit like that. Do this, do that, and being watched all the time, knowing every moment that you were a prisoner. Even having a big enclosure to live in wasn't really good enough, not if you were a wild animal. Yarra . . . that was a nice name . . . same sort

of name in a way as Tarzan. He saw himself in a loincloth, swinging through the jungle trees while his faithful cheetah, Yarra, followed him far below. He yawned, switched the radio off and stretched out to sleep.

So FAR Smiler and Yarra had been lucky. No one had sighted either of them. Two wardens from Longleat had tried following Yarra's spoor but found that the rain had washed them out. Nobody had tried to follow Smiler's tracks, but the police had alerted all patrol cars and the local constabulary, giving them Smiler's description. They had also notified sister Ethel, telling her that if Smiler appeared she must report him at once.

Ethel and her husband, Albert, were at this moment in the sitting room of their little villa in Fishponds, having cocoa before going to bed. It was a small neat room, everything shining and brushed and polished and dusted.

Ethel said, "That boy's always been a trouble and always will be. He's got a wild, stubborn streak in him."

Albert knew that everybody had streaks of some kind in them. He was much more easygoing than Ethel and he liked Smiler. He said, "My opinion is he run away from that place because he knew he didn't ought to have been there in the first instance."

Ethel put down her cocoa mug. "He went there because he was a bad one. Knocking an old lady over and taking her bag. And before that always lifting things. Bad company makes bad habits."

Albert sighed gently. "Smiler was light-fingered, yes. But not violent. He wouldn't harm a fly, let alone an old lady. All right, at the time I thought he had done it. But now I don't think he did."

"He was always lifting things and getting into scrapes. The way you start is the way you go on, and you go on lifting bigger things and getting into bigger scrapes."

Albert said reflectively, "It's all a matter of psychology. Smiler was what they call compensating for his homelife—or rather for the homelife he wasn't getting. No mother, and his dad off to sea nine months out of twelve. He was what they call making his protest against what society was doing to him."

Ethel sniffed loudly. "Well, I must say, that's the fanciest no-

tion I've ever heard. And anyway, that old lady stood right up in juvenile court and identified him."

Albert rose. His cocoa was finished and now he meant to go out to his workshop and smoke his good-night cigarette. He liked to sit on his bench and puff away while he dreamed impossible dreams—like being able to smoke in the parlor and the bedroom, to put his feet up on anything he chose and, perhaps now and then, to have a bottle of beer instead of cocoa for a bedtime drink.

He said pungently: "That old lady was as blind as a bat! She couldn't have recognized her own reflection in a mirror!" He moved to the door and added, "Well, I hope the lad's found a fair billet for tonight. It's freezing out."

ALBERT was right. It froze hard all night. When the first light came up over the easterly ridge of the valley, it revealed a world festooned with a delicate tracery of frost. The sun struck gleams of white, gold and blue fire from every branch and twig.

The brightening crack of light under the barn door woke Yarra. She rolled over and sat up on her haunches, tightening the muscles of her long forelegs to ease the night's laziness from them. She sat like an ancient Egyptian lion goddess, her liquid amber eyes watching the light under the door. The door of her hut at Longleat was always closed at night, and the warden opened it early in the morning. She waited for the sound of his feet outside.

Half an hour passed and the warden did not come. Yarra rose to her four feet, walked to the door and sniffed at it. Then she raised herself on her hind feet and scraped against the shut door, rattling and banging it impatiently.

The sounds eventually woke Smiler. It took him a minute or two to remember where he was. When he did, he jumped up quickly. Somebody was down below! His heart thumping, he cautiously lifted the loft trap and peered through. For a moment he watched in amazement. Then he swiftly dropped the trapdoor and shot the bolt across. He sank back on the hay, clapped a hand to his forehead and said out loud, "Blimey O'Bloody Reilly!"

A slow shiver of fear crept along Smiler's scalp as he realized what a narrow escape he had had. When he had come back from

throwing the rubbish away *that thing* had already been in the barn! He had closed the door and climbed the ladder and *that thing* must have been watching him! And now *that thing* was down there and he was up here! He went back to the loft trap and raised it a few inches. Down below Yarra was padding restlessly up and down. She caught the slight movement and swung around, making an angry movement with her jaws.

Smiler could see her clearly now. He saw the white shine of her teeth, the restless switching of the tail, and the long, lean length of her forelegs and body. He dropped the loft trap back into place and bolted it. "Samuel M.," he said to himself, "what you've got down there is that escaped cheetah! Yarra. And what you are stuck with right now is that you can't get out until you get her out. That's Thing Number One without any question."

He went to the barn window. Taking a good look at it for the first time, he saw that the window was not fixed in its frame as he had thought. He opened it and looked out. Six feet below him was the top of the barn door. The door latch was a curved handgrip with a thumb press you pushed down to lift the small cross lever on the inside. The door, he remembered, was awkwardly hung; once the catch was free, it swung inward of its own weight.

With his head stuck out of the window he considered his plan of campaign. The window was big enough for him to get through. It was a fair drop to the ground, but not so far that it worried him. Once in the yard all he had to do was . . . Well, what? Press the thumb catch down and then run for his life while that animal came after him like a streak of gold light? Not so-and-so likely. Just drop to the ground, and then tell the police or someone about the cheetah? They'd have him back in reform school before you could say knife. No—there was only one way. He had to get the door open from up here and let Yarra go off on her own.

What he wanted was a long stick with which to reach down and press the thumb catch. At the back of the loft he found a hayfork with the head broken off. It was about four feet long and would not reach the door. But in one corner of the loft was an old hen house, its floor made of long strips of wood. Smiler pulled one of the slats free, then lashed it to the broken hayfork with some twine

from the hay bales. He pushed his homemade pole through the window and after a couple of attempts managed to bang down the thumb catch. The door slowly began to open.

Before he could get his pole back through the window Yarra was out. She stopped a yard from the open door and looked up at Smiler with her amber eyes. She gave him a quick snapping hiss and then loped away around the corner of the barn.



Three

YARRA passed that day in the area. She went up the river and stopped to drink where a small carrier stream came into the main stream over a low waterfall. In the woods higher up the river she marked the movement of a cock pheasant foraging among the dead leaves. She covered twenty yards of ground before the bird saw her. It was brought down by one sweep of her taloned right forepaw. While she ate she heard the sound of children laughing and playing across the river, and the whine of cars on the main road running from Warminster to Mere.

The frost had held all day, and as the sun began to drop and the air turned colder, Yarra came down from the river woods. She was passing through a thicket when a keeper, shotgun under his arm, stepped out onto the path ten yards ahead. Man and beast saw each other at the same time. Yarra backed away, lowering

head and shoulders threateningly, and gave a low snarl. Instinctively, the keeper swung his shotgun to his shoulder and fired.

Although she had never been fired at before, the swift movement of the gun was warning enough for Yarra. She leaped sideways into the cover of a patch of young birches. The keeper fired one barrel and then the other as Yarra disappeared. A few pellets from the spread of shot caught her on the left flank. Then she was gone at top speed through the woods.

Ten minutes later the keeper was telephoning from his cottage to the Warminster police station.

AFTER Yarra had gone Smiler stayed in the loft waiting to see if the postman would call or perhaps Mrs. Bagnall come to do some housework in the cottage. Eventually he saw the postman ride by on his bicycle, but he did not deliver any letters.

An hour later Smiler was in the cottage, the back door locked and the key back on the porch rafter. The door had a spring lock which could be opened from the inside without a key. He had a drink of water, sluiced his head and neck under the tap, and then opened a can of baked beans and ate them. He tidied up meticulously, then started another inspection of the house.

The hallway running to the front door was red carpeted and hung with pictures of birds and flowers. A dining room and a large sitting room opened off either side. One wall of the sitting room was covered entirely with bookshelves, and in the window stood a flat-topped desk inlaid with red morocco leather. It was as nice a room as Smiler had ever seen.

On the top floor were three bedrooms. One was large, with two beds in it. The others had a single bed each. Leading off the big bedroom was a spacious bathroom with a mirror-fronted cabinet on the wall. Smiler's reflection confronted him in the mirror: snub-nose, blue eyes, his face freckled all over like a skylark's egg, and tousled blond hair. He took a comb from the ledge under the cabinet and tidied his hair.

Then he went down to the sitting room and looked at the bookshelves. There were a lot of books about fishing and hunting, rows of novels, a pile of maps on one shelf, and on the bottom shelf a

set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Smiler liked books. For two hours he sat on the floor enjoying himself. He looked up cheetahs in the encyclopedia and read that in Persia and India they had been used for hunting small game and antelopes. They were hooded, then taken out, and, when the hood was slipped, away they went after their prey. He lay back on the floor, saw himself with a hooded Yarra on a leash, the two of them moving along a great hillside. Then—wheeeh! Off came the hood, the leash was slipped and Yarra was away after a deer!

Smiler sat up and grinned. Some hope, he thought. Anyway, that cheetah was miles away by now if it had any sense. He pushed the book back onto the shelf. As he did so he saw that at the end of the shelf was a large dimple-sided whisky bottle with a slit cut in the cork so that you could drop money through. The bottle was three-quarters full of sixpenny pieces. Smiler picked it up and shook it. He thought there must be at least ten pounds in it.

As he put the bottle back he heard a key scraping at the back-door lock. Smiler was up and out of the front door like a shot. He raced through the garden and up the hillside to a small clump of stunted yews. From here he could look down on the cottage and barn. At least, he thought, he had left no telltale traces in the house. The whisky bottle was back in its place, and all the books. And he had tidied up the kitchen, wiping the sink fairly dry from his washing, and dropping the empty baked-bean can in the wastebin. . . . The baked-bean can! What if the person looked in the bin and saw it? That would give the game away. Well, there was nothing he could do about it now.

After about five minutes Smiler saw a woman cross the yard wheeling a bicycle. She was dumpy-looking and oldish. She pushed her bicycle through the side gate and then rode away over the bridge.

Smiler gave her a few minutes to get clear and then he walked down the hill, past the big white gate and onto the bridge. Here he leaned over the parapet and pretended to be gazing at the river. But his eyes were on the house; for all he knew, more than one person might have gone in. It proved a very wise precaution. He had not been there long when the front door opened and a girl

came out. She slammed the door behind her and then came onto the road and toward the bridge.

She was a nice-looking girl, with a tanned complexion and shoulder-length black hair, wearing a shiny red plastic coat and high black boots. Smiler didn't dislike girls, but he didn't have a lot of time for most of them. They never seemed to say or do anything that was particularly interesting.

As the girl walked onto the bridge she saw Smiler. She stopped behind him and said, "Hullo."

Smiler half turned. "Hullo," he said.

"What are you doing here?"

"Just looking at the river," said Smiler. She had a friendly smile, and it occurred to him that he might get some useful information from her. He nodded at the cottage. "You live there?"

"No. Mum does for them. I come with her."

"She the one that went up on the bike?"

"S right. I comes down with her on the back of her bike. But as it's all uphill going back, I walk. Today she came down to pick up the letters, but I stopped to dust the dining room."

"Don't nobody live there, then?"

"They're away. I haven't seen you around before, have I?" The girl leaned over the parapet beside him.

"No."

"Where you from?"

Smiler hesitated and then he said, "Oh, over Warminster way. Where do you live?"

"Up the hill. 'Bout a mile. Lodge Cottage." The girl picked up a lump of moss from one of the bridge stones and dropped it into the river, saying, "The river's going down fast."

"Plenty of fish in there, I suppose?"

"Trout and grayling. There's some trout over three pounds. My father's the water keeper. What's your name?"

Feeling easier, Smiler said, "Johnny Pickering." Johnny Pickering was a boy that Smiler knew but didn't like. "What's yours?"

"Ivy, but I don't like it much. All my friends call me Pat."

"I like Pat best, too. How often do you and your mother come down here?"

"Once a week. Every Wednesday, mostly. But I don't always come." She straightened up and gave him a bright smile. "Well, I got to go. But if you live in Warminster I might see you sometime. I'm starting a job there next week. In Woolworth's. 'By."

She walked away up the hill and just before she turned a corner she looked back and waved. As girls went, Smiler thought, she wasn't too bad.

He waited another few minutes and then slipped into the courtyard to the back door. Mrs. Bagnall, for it must have been she, had left the key on the rafter. He went in and found the letters gone from the basket behind the door. His baked-bean can was still in the wastebin, and he put it in his pocket. Then he took another can of sardines from the cupboard, some rolls from the deep freezer, and went up to the barn loft.

He put the rolls in the sunshine on the windowsill to thaw out and then lay back on his hay to do some thinking, for it was clear to him now that his plan of campaign was not good enough. What he was doing was living from day to day and from hand to mouth. Also, he was living in dangerous territory where he could easily make some silly slipup that would give him away—like that baked-bean can, for instance. Or Mrs. Bagnall might spot things gone. . . . No, he had to make himself really safe. It was nine months before his father would be back, maybe a year, and he had to keep from being caught all that time.

Sustained thought was hard, fatiguing work. The hay was warm and soft. After about two hours—with a break to eat sardines and half-thawed rolls—Smiler dropped off to sleep.

AFTER being shot at by the keeper, Yarra kept moving fast. She was angry and disturbed; but her pelt was rough and wiry, and the small shot which had caught her left flank had caused no real harm. She took a line along the valley-side, well above the river, eventually crossing into a plantation of young conifers and moving down through them until she reached their boundary.

She sat on her haunches looking down into the valley. It was growing darker every moment now. Up the river, away to her left, were the bridge and the gray roof thatch and white-plastered

end wall of Ford Cottage. To her right, farther downstream and toward the north and Warminster, she could see the lights of houses. Sometimes car headlights swept along the main road.

In a while she dropped down to the river, found the fishing path and walked slowly upstream toward the bridge. She moved like a shadow close to the cottage and then across to the barn. But the door was shut. She could not understand why. Always at Longleat the hut door was opened at night for the cheetahs to enter. She lazily stretched her jaws and gave a low, protesting rumble. Then she rasped at the barn door, rattling and shaking it. When it did not open she snarled and spat angrily.

Smiler came out of sleep with a start just in time to hear Yarra rattle the door again. He was on his feet quickly and at the window. At that moment Yarra moved back, squatted on the ground and sat staring at the door. Smiler saw her clearly. He clapped his hand to his forehead and cried, "Cor, Blimey O'Bloody Reilly—she's back again!"

There was no doubt in his mind as to what he must do. He instinctively accepted that, since Yarra was a fugitive like himself, he could not refuse her shelter. He got his homemade pole and opened the barn window. Yarra heard him and she backed away a few yards, raised her blunt head and gave another rumble.

"All right, old girl," Smiler murmured. "Won't take a moment." He jabbed down in the gloom at the door latch. After a few tries, he hit the thumb press and the door swung back slowly. Yarra looked up at him once, padded in a small semicircle around the open door and moved on into the barn.

Smiler went back to his bed and turned the radio on to the local news. It made no mention of one Samuel Miles, but it had plenty to say about Yarra. The public were warned that she had been sighted that day a couple of miles from the village of Crockerton. She would not attack an adult unless cornered or suddenly surprised. But she could be dangerous to young children, and parents were warned not to let them move about unaccompanied. A cordon was being thrown around the area where she had been sighted. It was expected that she would soon be captured.

Smiler began to get a bit worried. Yarra was no trouble to him,

and it didn't bother him that she might go about taking a few chickens . . . but she was dangerous to small children! Oughtn't he to do something about it? Oughtn't he to drop out of the barn window now and find the nearest policeman?

And if he did? "Well, Samuel M.," he told himself, "that would be the end of you. They would say you were a good lad and had done right, but then you'd be shipped back to that school."

It was a difficult problem. Yarra would go off tomorrow and almost certainly she would be caught—and he would still be free. Anyway, he wasn't too keen about dropping from that window right now and having Yarra come out of the barn after him. But if Yarra weren't caught tomorrow? Then she would come padding back here to her shelter. Well, tomorrow evening he would leave the barn door open and he would stay in the cottage, watching. The moment he saw Yarra come back he would go up to the village of Crockerton. Bound to be a public telephone there. He could call the police, say where Yarra was, refuse to say who he was, and then he would have to take off quickly.

Down below, he heard Yarra stirring, and he said aloud, "Old girl, if you got any sense you won't come back tomorrow. And I hope you don't, because I don't want to lose a soft billet."

THE SUN was well up over the valley ridge when Smiler woke. He stretched and yawned, then he got up, unbolted the trap and looked down. The lower part of the barn was empty; Yarra had gone. Smiler went down, peered cautiously around the barn door to make sure that the coast was clear and then, closing the door, he went across to the cottage. In the kitchen he had a drink of water and some crackers and washed his hands.

Although he had bad habits, like smoking an occasional cigarette, and was no respecter of small items of other people's property when he was bored and idle, Smiler was fundamentally a good sort. When he wished, he could be methodical and industrious. He was also shrewd and far-thinking in an emergency; and he was in an emergency now—the emergency of keeping Samuel M. out of the hands of the police. The previous day he had come to some very clear conclusions:

The Runaways

1. He couldn't hang around Ford Cottage and the barn for nine months, cadging food and shelter.
2. So long as Major Collingwood was away, however, he could just use the barn for a sleeping place.
3. He had to go out and get a job so that he would have the money for food and other things.
4. But to get a job wasn't all that easy, because the moment he showed his face some policeman would recognize him. He had, therefore, to disguise himself somehow.
5. And because people were always full of questions, he had to have answers as to who he was, where he lived, and so on.
6. And sometime he would have to telephone the shipping company offices in Bristol and find out when his father was due back so that he could meet him.

It was a long list but Smiler felt that he had worked out the answers to most of the immediate problems, and he now set about them with a will. He went first into the sitting room and from the dimpled whisky bottle took out two pounds' worth of sixpenny pieces and wrapped them in his handkerchief. Then he went through the pile of maps until he found one with Warminster marked on the cover. He decided to take it with him.

Next, Smiler went up to the bathroom. He had seen two things there which might help solve one of his problems: a bottle of sun-tan stain and a bottle of hair coloring. Dark Brown, the label on the second bottle said. Smiler read the instructions carefully. Wet your hair and apply the cream as you would a shampoo. Lather it up and leave the foam on for five, ten or twenty minutes, according to how dark you want the hair to go. Rinse, then set hair in your favorite style. Smiler grinned.

He stripped off his shirt and set to work. It wasn't as easy as the instructions made it sound, but after twenty minutes his hair looked dark enough. He then worked the tanning stuff into his face and hands and around the back of his neck. It didn't cover the freckles by any means, but it looked all right. After that it took him some time to clean up the basin. He admired his reflection, then began to explore the house for clothes. He was going to keep his own jeans, but he wanted some shirts and socks, and something

to replace his brown tweed jacket which would have been listed in the description of him issued by the police.

Major Collingwood was a small man, Smiler soon realized. He found two old blue flannel shirts that would be a fair fit, three pairs of thick woolen socks, a gray pullover and a well-worn green parka. In a cupboard under the stairs he found, too, a pair of Wellington boots that fit him.

Conscious of the liberties he was taking, and not overlooking the fact that he *might* be picked up, Smiler felt he must try to square himself with Major Collingwood. He went to the desk in the sitting room, found a pencil and notepaper, and wrote:

Dear Major Collingwood, I hope you find this and will understand that I am really only borrowing and will make it alright when my Dad comes back, like paying for the food and making up the bottle sixpences, if I don't get to do it myself first. I have tried not to make a mess, except for some hair dye on the corner of the bathroom curtains. It is a nice house and I hope your wife gets much better.

Signed, Hunted. (P.S. I can't give my right name, for reasons)

Also the bike, and some other odds and ends, which maybe I will have returned. Signed, H.

He took the letter to a corner cupboard which he had previously looked into. It held bottles and glasses and also a half-empty box of cigars. Smiler reckoned that Mrs. Bagnall was unlikely to open the cigar box, but the major would when he returned—perhaps the first evening. He put the letter in the box.

Back in the barn Smiler stowed all his loose stuff out of sight under a hay bale. Dressed in a clean shirt and socks, his own jeans, the gray pullover and the parka and the Wellington boots, he was ready to tackle Warminster.

Shutting the barn door after him, he wheeled the bicycle from the car bay through the side gate and pedaled it up the lane to the main road. He turned right on the main road and twenty minutes later was in Warminster. He had already given himself a lecture on the importance of acting naturally; people only noticed you if you let your worry about being noticed show. So Smiler rode into Warminster whistling. At a shop in the High Street he

bought the local newspaper. He then cycled around the town to get some idea of his bearings and possible escape routes.

He ended up in the free car park near the railway station and went into the cafeteria. He got himself a plate of sausages, two slabs of fruitcake and a cup of coffee, and then sat in the window where he could keep an eye on his parked bicycle.

He drank and ate with relish. He decided that this might turn out to be his lucky day. So far, no one had so much as given him a curious glance, not even a policeman who had walked past him as he came out of the newspaper shop.

In the SITUATIONS VACANT column of the newspaper was a job that sounded right up his street:

STRONG LAD wanted for kennel work, experience not necessary, good wages, free lunch. Mrs. Angela Lakey, Danebury Kennels, Heytesbury

Well, Samuel M., he thought, that sounds all right, particularly the free lunch. For a moment he remembered longingly sister Ethel's Irish stews. Whatever else she was not, she was a jolly good cook. Kennels, eh? But where was Heytesbury? He didn't want to be too far from his barn if he could help it. He consulted his map and soon found Heytesbury. He worked out a route that—if he got the job—would only be three or four miles each way.

A few minutes later Smiler was cycling toward Heytesbury, wondering what Mrs. Angela Lakey would be like.

YARRA, when she left the barn that morning, followed her usual route up the river, keeping just inside the fringe of the woods, but she was unlucky with her hunting. Half a mile from the cottage she put up a drake mallard from the edge of a swampy hollow. The drake went up like a rocket and with him went his mate. The choice of two targets made Yarra hesitate, and when she leaped for the female mallard she missed it by a foot. Farther on in the woods she put up a wily old buck hare.

The hare raced away down the wooded slope. Yarra went after him, but his twists and turns in and out of the trees balked her of a clear, fast run. At the riverbank the hare took off in a long

leap. He splashed into the water and swam across. Yarra pulled up on her haunches and wrinkled her mask in disgust. An hour later she was almost at the end of the wooded valley slope when, fifty yards ahead, she saw a lean gray shape at the water's edge.

It was a heron standing in two inches of water just where the flooded river lapped over the bank. A back eddy had cut a deep pool close in under the bank, and it was a favorite fishing place of heron. Yarra lowered her body and began to stalk him, keeping close to the cover of the winter-dry clumps of flags and reeds.

The heron, the wisest and most cautious of birds and possessed of infinite patience, was well aware of Yarra. But he was hungry, as all wild birds and beasts are during the lean months of winter, and he meant to have his meal. Not three feet below him was a good-sized grayling, moving up and down, but so far not rising high enough for the heron to risk a thrust of his beak.

Yarra worked her way forward, flat to the ground. She was bunching her muscles for her leap when the grayling below the heron came surfaceward like a slim airship rising. The heron's beak rapiersed down and took the fish. With the movement Yarra sprang and the heron rose, great pearl-gray wings spreading wide, his long legs trailing as he planed away.

Behind him there was a splash. Yarra's right forepaw had missed the heron and, unable to stop herself, she had come down in the water. In a bad temper, she pulled herself back onto the bank. She sat on her haunches and licked at her shoulders and neck mantle, grumbling to herself. It was then that she heard the sound of men's voices and the rattle of sticks against trees.

As Yarra, disturbed by the noise, headed away upriver at a lope, the hunt moved behind her. A long line of beaters had been formed early that morning on the outskirts of Warminster. Now it was moving upriver, and at this very moment the cheetah warden was standing on the bank where the hare had leaped into the water, examining the spoors Yarra had left in the soft mud.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon when Smiler found his way to Danebury Kennels. Danebury House was a large red brick building with an untidy lawn in front of it and stable and kennel

blocks at the rear. As he came up the drive Smiler could hear what sounded like a hundred dogs barking and howling.

He rang the front doorbell. The door was opened by a very large woman of about forty who was dressed in a green sweater and riding breeches. She had a big, squarish, red face and an untidy mop of short black hair. She was holding a chicken leg and as she chewed on it she surveyed Smiler as though he were something the dog had brought home. She finished chewing and then said brusquely, "Well, boy?"

Smiler pulled the newspaper from his pocket and said, "Please, ma'am, I've come about the job."

Mrs. Lakey eyed him for a moment. "Oh, you have, have you? Well, let's have a look at you." She took his right arm in a firm grasp. "How strong are you, boy?" Her voice was brisk, but not unkind, and there was a small twinkle in her dark eyes.

"I'm strong enough, I think, ma'am."

"Time will show." Mrs. Lakey peered at his face and said, "You're very sunburned for this time of year, aren't you?"

Smiler said quickly, "My skin's always like that, ma'am."

"Don't call me ma'am—call me Mrs. Lakey. All right, come in and let's have your particulars." She turned away down the hall. As Smiler followed, she called over her shoulder, "Shut the door. Fresh air's for outside houses, not inside."

She led the way to a large, bright room that looked out over the lawn. The walls were hung with fox masks and brushes, glass cases with stuffed fish and birds in them, photographs of horses and dogs. Over the big open fireplace was a large oil painting of a fresh-faced, gray-haired man dressed in white breeches and hunting pink. (Later, Smiler learned that this was Mrs. Lakey's dead father who had been a colonel of the hussars.) Before the fire, between two shabby leather armchairs, was a round table which held a tray of cold food and a glass of dark liquid with a thick white froth on it which Smiler recognized as stout. Just inside the door was an open rolltop desk, crammed with papers.

Mrs. Lakey told Smiler to sit by the fire. She went to the desk and found a pencil and a piece of paper which she brought to the round table. She sat down opposite him, took a tomato from the

tray, and said, "Cold snack today. Milly's away shopping. I've got a lot to do this afternoon so, with your permission, boy"—she gave him a smile which suddenly took all the sternness out of her face—"I'll victual up while I take your particulars. Name?"

"Pickering," he said without hesitation. "Johnny Pickering."

Mrs. Lakey wrote it down, and said, "Age?"

"Fifteen and a half."

"Address?"

"I live with my aunt, Mrs. Brown, at Hillside Bungalow, Crockerton. My mother and father . . . well, they're dead. They was killed in a car accident three years ago."

"Sorry to hear it. Damn cars. They're just murder on the roads. Horse and trap—you got a tumble and a bruising and that was that. Never mind. Times move. Any previous job? References?"

"No, ma'am—I mean Mrs. Lakey. I left school Christmas."

"Any experience with animals?"

"No, Mrs. Lakey. But I like 'em. And I had a dog once."

"Willing?"

Puzzled, Smiler said, "Oh, yes, I'm willing to take the job."

"No, boy. I mean are you willing to work hard? Sober, industrious, clean and tidy? Can't have you if you're not all that—and cheerful. And you've got to have a good appetite. Milly can't bear cooking for those who pick and scratch. So what do you say?"

A little out of his depth, Smiler said, "I think so, Mrs. Lakey."

"Good." Mrs. Lakey finished her stout. "You seem a likely number to me. Wages, three pounds a week. Free lunch. Sundays off. Half days to be arranged as work permits. Start at seven thirty. Finish at five this time of the year. Later as the sun god stays with us longer. Five shillings an hour overtime. Working overalls provided. Anything in that frighten you?"

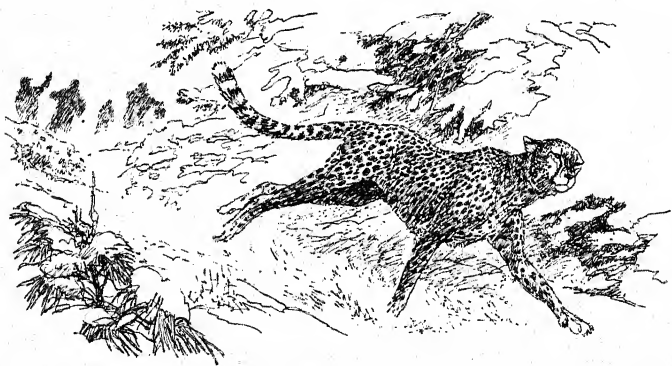
"No, Mrs. Lakey."

"Well, it would most of the young lay-about's these days who want a four-hour day, two months' paid holiday a year, and then wonder why the country's going to the dogs. Which is the biggest slander on dogs ever uttered. And talking of dogs, let me tell you, my bark is not worse than my bite. My bite is terrible!" She winked at him suddenly.

Smiler, who was a bit uncertain about her, was warmed by the wink. He said, with the smile sister Ethel said could charm the birds from the trees, "You seem very nice to me, Mrs. Lakey."

Mrs. Lakey looked at him, slowly grinned and then cried heartily, "Well now, it's a compliment I'm getting! The first for ten years. Right now, run along with you. Be here at half past seven tomorrow and we'll see how you shape up."

As Smiler let himself out a small Jack Russell terrier darted from some bushes. It chased him all the way down the drive, snapping at his back wheel. But Smiler didn't mind. Going down the road he began to whistle. "Samuel M.," he told himself, "you carried it off like a hero. You've got a job, as easy as kissing your hand." Crikey! Seven thirty! Ought he to buy himself an alarm clock in Warminster? Yes, he'd have to do that. If he turned up late, he'd have Mrs. Lakey on his tail, biting worse than her bark. But free lunches and three pounds a week! He was in clover.



Four

ON THE plateau at the valley-top Yarra moved out of the trees and began to quarter the ground eastward across the rough amber-colored grasslands. Near a Forestry Commission plantation of young firs she put up a hare. The hare laid its ears back and went like the wind, Yarra racing after it. At the edge of the plantation

the hare found its way blocked by a small-meshed wire fence. It turned right along the fence ten yards ahead of Yarra. She swung across the angle at top speed and leaped for it. Her forepaws smashed down on its back and her hindquarters skidded around to crash into the fence.

As she began to eat her kill a Land Rover came over a ridge to her right and began bumping and swaying slowly along the fence. Yarra stopped eating and watched it without fear. She had seen many like it in Longleat Park. She had chased meat trailing behind a Land Rover, and had often jumped to the cab roof. But now she wanted to eat undisturbed.

When the Land Rover was within forty yards of her, the driver saw her and stopped the car. The man beside him began to speak into his walkie-talkie. Over the air the news of Yarra's location went out to the police cars on the roads, and to the beaters now moving slowly up through Southleigh Wood, the top boundary of which lay a few hundred yards down the slope from Yarra.

When the Land Rover did not move, Yarra began to eat again. Almost immediately, from behind her, the cheetah's quick ears caught the sounds of men coming through the wood. Gripping the big hare in her jaws, she leaped over the fence into the plantation of young firs. She trotted fast across the plantation and kept going until she had crossed the Crockerton road.

A few minutes later she padded into a tall clump of wild rhododendrons and crouched down to eat her hare. As she did so, the first fat flakes of snow began to drift down from the leaden sky, slanting a little in a cold wind that was rising fast.

In Warminster, Smiler went into Woolworth's to buy his alarm clock. The girl at the counter was amused when he paid for it all in sixpenny pieces.

"I been saving up," said Smiler. "Present for me mum." Riding away down the Crockerton road, Smiler thought that it would have been nice if it really were a present for his mum. She had died a year after his birth, but he knew a lot about her from his father, who worshipped her memory.

Before he reached the cottage it began to snow and blow hard.

Large, heavy flakes filled the air, whirling and spinning in the wind, and he pulled up the hood of his parka for protection. As he neared the cottage he began to think of Yarra. If she came back he would have to do something about her.

He hid his bicycle in the orchard and then, keeping his eyes open for Yarra, slipped around and opened the barn door. The courtyard had an inch covering of snow. The fast-falling flakes rapidly obliterated the footprints he made in crossing to the back door of the house. He let himself in, then went upstairs to the bathroom to watch the barn door. With him he had a package of crackers and a pork pie which he had bought in Warminster.

For two reasons he hoped that Yarra would not come back. One, because giving her away when she was on the run like him seemed the act of a traitor, though he knew he would have to do it for the safety of other people. And two, because it was going to give him a lot of trouble. He didn't want to have to turn out and find a telephone, because it would mean that he couldn't come back safely to the cottage until Yarra had been taken.

But Yarra did not come. Sometime after nightfall the snow stopped and the sky cleared, so Smiler could easily have seen her if she had come to the barn. He waited dutifully until the eight-day clock in the hall struck nine (Mrs. Bagnall wound it up once a week). Then he found a couple of blankets in one of the spare bedrooms, rolled himself up and slept.

THE SNOW saved Yarra from being caught. While she was eating her hare, the hunting line swept forward through the young firs and crossed the Crockerton road behind her. She was sighted as she left her clump of rhododendrons. A couple of the men unwisely gave loud shouts which alarmed her. She went away at a gallop, clearing a hedge into a field of young winter wheat and following the line of the hedge. As long as she could hear the men behind her she kept going steadily. When the noises died she slackened her pace.

She was in strange country now and her movement was dictated by the lay of the land. She kept close to the hedges and over open ground trotted fast from the cover of one clump of bushes to

the next. Before crossing a road she watched for any sign of humans. The snow and the approach of night were her allies. The snow rapidly filled the tracks she left and made fast going hard for the men who followed. After an hour they had lost all contact with her, and the hunt was called off except for the police cars. Had they but known it, the policemen were wasting their time: Yarra had long since moved out of the area.

The noise of a small waterfall led Yarra to the river, and she began to follow it downstream, parallel to the Warminster-Heytesbury road. Half a mile down the bank a black shape loomed up out of the darkness and the now thinning snow. It was a dilapidated fishing hut with a large plank seat inside. Yarra turned into the hut, sniffed around it and then leaped onto the seat. She groomed and cleaned herself, licking at her muddy, wet thighs and nibbling at her swelling dugs, where the restlessness inside her seemed to be lodged. She was tired and bad-tempered. If anyone had come to the door of the hut at that moment, he would not have had a very warm welcome.

Finally she settled down on the hard board and fell into a light sleep. The river ran by, murmuring quietly. A water vole made a plop as it dropped into the stream and began a night forage down the bankside. A barn owl sailed low on silent wings over the water meadow, quartering the grass for a mouse or shrew. A fox coming up the river caught Yarra's scent and decided to have nothing to do with it; he trotted a wide half circle away from the hut.

The low-pressure system which had brought the snow up from the west now moved away east, and the temperature rose. The snow melted fast and in a couple of hours was gone from all but the sheltered dips and the north slopes of the high ground.

At three o'clock in the morning Yarra woke, stiff and uncomfortable. She left the hut and continued downriver. On the outskirts of Heytesbury she struck a side road that led over a bridge into the village. She padded through the village, across the main road and up another side road. The night was still and deserted of all humans, but as she passed the entrance to Danebury House the Jack Russell terrier saw her from the bay window of his mistress's bedroom. He jumped up and began to bark. From her bed, half

in sleep, Mrs. Angela Lakey reached down to the floor, where she kept a small pile of cushions for the purpose, and hurled one at the terrier as she muttered, "Go to sleep, you old fool!"

Above the house the road ran on to the wide sweeps of Salisbury Plain, which the army used for artillery, tank and infantry training. There was a red-and-white drop post across the road, and a sign which read:

IMBER ARMY RANGE

ROAD CLOSED

Yarra went under the drop post and then left the road for the rough, wild grassland. Ten minutes later she came across an old, rusted Sherman tank which was used for target practice. The turret had been blown askew, and there was a large gap in the side of the empty hull. Yarra looked through into the hull. Somebody had long ago dumped a load of bracken there and covered it with a couple of sacks to make a resting place.

Yarra jumped inside, sniffed around the interior, and then began to tread the sacks and bracken into a bed. When she was satisfied she flopped down, and in a few minutes she was sleeping.

Above her on the inside plates of the tank someone had written in white chalk—*Bombardier Andy Coran, only 5 yrs and 13 days to serve*. Under that, in another hand, was—*Please leave this hotel as you would wish to find it*.

THE alarm bell brought Smiler out of bed with a jerk. Outside it was still dark. He had a quick wash in the kitchen, ate some of the crackers he had left, and then tidied everything up.

When he went out he found the snow had all gone and there was a fresh wind blowing. He tiptoed over to the barn. He didn't want to leave the door open all day, but he wasn't overlooking the fact that Yarra might have come back during the night. When he came to the door he reached quickly for the handle and pulled it shut with a slam. If Yarra were in there, the noise would have wakened her. He stood listening, but no sound came from inside.

A few moments later Smiler was pushing his bicycle up the hill away from Ford Cottage, and giving himself a talking-to for not

having bought a bicycle lamp. Although light enough to see, it was still officially dark enough for him to be showing a light, and the last thing he wanted was to be stopped by a policeman.

Warm and snug in his pullover and parka, he followed the back-roads route he had worked out for getting to Heytesbury. He had a good memory for maps, a "bump of locality" as Albert used to say. Thinking of sister Ethel and her Albert, Smiler decided that he would soon have to get a message to them that he was all right. He didn't want them thinking he was dead and then writing to his dad. The problem of sending a message, without giving himself away, occupied him as he rode.

Smiler arrived at Danebury House at twenty minutes past seven. He was met at the drive by the terrier whose name, he later learned, was Tonks. Tonks gave him a yapping welcome and then trotted up the drive alongside him.

Mrs. Lakey greeted him heartily, smacking him on the back and saying, "Morning, boy. Punctual. That's what I like to see. Begin as you mean to go on." She gave him a cup of coffee in the kitchen and then took him outside to "show him the ropes."

Mrs. Lakey and her sister, Miss Milly Finn, ran breeding kennels for English and Gordon setters, as well as boarding kennels where people could leave their dogs. There was also a small section with room for about eight cats. The cats were Miss Milly's responsibility, though Smiler had to look after them most of the time. Miss Milly ran the house, did the cooking and kept the books with no outside help.

In addition to these animals, there were a chestnut mare, Penny, and a bay gelding called—for some unknown reason—Bacon. These were kept in the stable, and hired out to people who wanted to ride or hunt. In a run at the bottom of a vegetable garden lived twelve White Leghorn hens, known as the Apostles. At the back of the kennel runs was a storehouse where all the hound meal and dog and cat food was kept and cooked.

It was Smiler's job to feed all the dogs and cats and keep their water bowls full. He had to clean out the kennels twice a week, feed and water the hens and collect the eggs, and exercise the setters. He had to groom and brush all dogs twice a week, fetch

in logs for the house, wash down the horse box, and dig the vegetable garden when he had any spare time.

On the first morning, as Mrs. Lakey rattled off all this to him, his head spun and he felt that he would never be able to manage. After a few days, however, he was managing easily, though—since he hated digging—he made sure that he didn't often have spare time for that.

The most cheering thing for Smiler was Miss Milly, who was younger than Mrs. Lakey. She was short and plump, fair-haired and fresh-faced, and jolly and kind. Her kitchen was spotless and smelled always of baking and cooking. Smiler's first free lunch was a revelation that outdid even Ethel's culinary prowess. He was served steak-and-kidney pie, Brussels sprouts and mashed potatoes. For "afters" he had treacle tart with custard and could have finished up with Cheddar cheese and fresh-baked bread if he had had room for it.

There was one awkward moment for Smiler at the end of one of his first days. When he went into the scullery to hang up his working overalls, Miss Milly was there, polishing a pair of Mrs. Lakey's riding boots.

"How long does it take you to get home, Johnny?" she asked.

"Oh, not long, Miss Milly."

She stared thoughtfully at the sheen she had worked on one of the boots and said, "I know Crockerton well. Hillside Bungalow? Can't recall that, Johnny. Where is it?"

Smiler gathered his wits and said, "Well . . . it's sort of past the post office and then down a side path toward the river."

"Near the old millhouse, you mean?"

"That's right, Miss Milly."

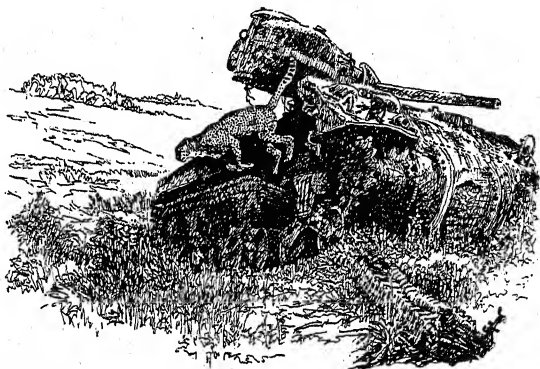
"Well, ride home carefully."

As he wheeled his bicycle out of the yard, Mrs. Lakey came around the corner on Penny. She pulled up and said, "Finished for the day, boy?"

"Yes, ma'am . . . I mean, Mrs. Lakey."

"Good. Well, boy, we'll make something of you. You move well. Should stay the course if your wind holds. Get a good night's rest and come back fighting fit in the morning."

In Heytesbury Smiler stopped at a garage and bought a bicycle lamp with his last sixpenny pieces. The garage attendant looked at the money, winked at Smiler and said, "Been robbing the poor box, then?"



Five

YARRA left her tank shelter soon after first light. Outside she stretched and then spent some minutes giving herself a good grooming. It was a clear, almost cloudless day, with a brisk wind blowing across the plain from the southwest.

Her grooming finished, she loped down the hill, where she found a pool of rainwater and drank. For the next two hours she circled wide over the eastern portion of Salisbury Plain, an area about six miles long and five deep. The whole plain was some twenty to thirty miles long, a vast expanse of rolling, dun-colored grass and downland. The land belonged to the Ministry of Defence, and the public for the most part was excluded. When people were admitted at weekends they had to keep to the rough tracks and roads, which were marked with notices that read:

DANGER—UNEXPLODED MISSILES
DO NOT LEAVE THE CARRIAGEWAYS
YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

When the red flags were flying at the army entrance points to the plain, known as vedettes, nobody was allowed entry except the military personnel engaged in maneuvers. Land wardens patrolled the roads and tracks in Land Rovers to see that no unauthorized persons came into the area.

Given over by day to the troops, the plain was also the home of many wild creatures—the hare, the fox, the stoat and weasel, the wild deer, the rat and the rabbit. In the air above the plain flew the buzzard, the kestrel and the sparrow hawk, all of them alert for the movement below of pheasant, partridge and the small birds that lived in the tall grasses and thickets. In fact, although the plain looked barren, it teemed with life.

Yarra put up a rabbit from behind a boulder and raced, doubled and twisted with it at her leisure, and finally killed and ate it. At midday she lay in the sun just below a ridgetop, her orange-and-black pelt merging into her background so that from fifty yards she was practically invisible. A mile away, on a distant slope, sat an old Churchill tank. As Yarra blinked her golden amber eyes against the sun, there was a loud crack away to her right. Alongside the tank the earth fountained upward in a plume of mud, grass tufts and black smoke. Yarra flinched at the sight, and gave a silent gape of her jaws to show her displeasure.

There was another crumping, cracking noise from the left. This time an antitank shell hit the Churchill in the forepart of its hull and a large piece of plating flew into the air. Yarra moved away to seek another resting place. She was at the start of learning many lessons. She would come to know the sounds of guns—from the mad chatter of automatic weapons to the slow, heavy thump of large-caliber shells exploding—the rattle of an approaching tank, the monstrous gnat-song of helicopters in the air above, and to move away from them all. But on most days the plain would be free to her and the other animals during the early morning hours and again in the slow-stretching evening hours, from five to six o'clock onward.

On this, Yarra's first day there, she moved and hunted in comparative peace. She killed two hares in the afternoon and ate them both. Since she only needed about three pounds of meat a day to

keep her satisfied, she hunted no more. As the light began to go from the sky, she went back to her Sherman tank. She arranged her bed, dropped to it and settled to sleep.

SEVEN or eight miles away Smiler was settling down for the night in the barn. He now had everything there he needed. He had his clothes, the borrowed radio, two borrowed blankets from the spare bedroom, a small store of food he had bought on the way back, drinking and washing water in a bucket he had found in the barn. The first day of a new regime was almost over.

Back at Danebury House Mrs. Lakey was sitting in one of the leather armchairs, smoking a cigar and sipping a glass of whisky. Tonks was asleep before the fire. Miss Milly sat in the other chair, sipping a glass of sweet Marsala wine.

Mrs. Lakey said, "Well, what do you think of the boy, Milly?"

"He's a good boy, Jelly." Jelly was her nickname for her sister, Angela, and Mrs. Lakey had learned to put up with it.

"Could be," announced Mrs. Lakey slowly. "Tonks has taken to him. That's a good sign."

"I've taken to him, too," said Miss Milly, and added, "And Jelly, for all the work that Johnny has to do, three pounds a week is not enough. He should have four."

"Nonsense, Milly. Boys should work for the love of a job."

"Four," said Miss Milly. "He's got to pay his way with his aunt."

Mrs. Lakey sighed and said, "Toss you for it."

"Right," said Miss Milly. She produced a shilling from her handbag and spun it on the table. "Heads four, tails three."

The coin settled down and showed a head.

"I win," said Miss Milly, smiling.

"You've got a soft heart, Milly."

"And so have you, only you don't show it often. As soon as I get a chance I'll go and see Johnny's aunt in Crockerton. Poor boy, how awful losing his mother and father like that."

WHEN Smiler arrived at work the next morning he was greeted by Mrs. Lakey at the back door and invited in for a cup of coffee. Over the coffee she told him he was showing such promise that

she had decided to up his wages to four pounds a week. However, he would have to take on cleaning out the stables and feeding Penny and Bacon. Later, if he liked, she would teach him to ride.

During the following days Smiler buckled down to his job with cheerfulness and goodwill, and soon knew his way around the place. Some of the animals became great favorites with him. He particularly liked a yellow-and-white English setter dog called Lemon Drop and a black-and-tan Gordon setter bitch called Fairy. When he took the dogs for a walk around the paddock and up the little valley beyond it, he always had to keep an eye on Lemon Drop because he had a habit of wandering.

There was plenty of coming and going at Danebury House. Smiler got to know all the calling tradesmen: the butcher, the baker, the milkman; and everyone got to know Smiler (Johnny) and to accept him. Miss Milly fussed over him like a mother hen and he ate like royalty. Outside, Mrs. Lakey kept him hard at work and he grew strong and fit. After two weeks Mrs. Lakey put him up on Penny and gave him his first riding lesson. It ended with his being thrown into a watercress pool in the middle of the paddock; but at the end of the first week Mrs. Lakey said, "Good, boy. You look less like a sack of hay on a seesaw than you did."

On the road between Crockerton and Heytesbury people got to know Smiler and would wave to him as he passed. At Ford Cottage he had fallen into an easy routine. Each night when he got back he went into the cottage and checked the mail in case there was a postcard from Major Collingwood to Mrs. Bagnall saying when he was coming home. On Sunday he would get on his bike and explore the country and, in the evening, go into Warminster to the movies. He saved the best part of his earnings, slowly amassing a small hoard of pound notes which he kept in a tin box behind a loose board in the barn loft. The rest of his belongings he hid under the hay before he left each morning.

Before the first month was out he found a way to write to Ethel and Albert. One day the dogmeat man asked Smiler to go down to Southampton on a Saturday to see a football match. So Smiler took the day off and went with him. In Southampton he posted a letter which read:

Dear Sis and Albert, Don't worry about me I am doing fine and am shipping to sea for six months. Can't tell you the name natcherally. Not to worry I am in the pink.

Samuel M.

Albert—forced by Ethel—passed the information to the Southampton police, who made a few inquiries around the docks and shipping companies, but “natcherally” got nowhere.

The weeks went by. March came, with its high winds and occasional days hot enough to make one think of summer. The catkins bloomed and the snowdrops gave way to daffodils and crocuses. Once or twice smart snowstorms returned to remind everyone that winter wasn't going to pass without a few last skirmishes.

Every fortnight Smiler went into Warminster and bought himself a tube of dye and some suntan stuff from Woolworth's to give his hair and face a new dressing. Every time he did so Mrs. Lakey would look at him oddly the next morning.

Once in Woolworth's Smiler also went to the electrical counter to get a battery for the transistor radio. As he was looking over the display, a voice said, “Hullo, you.”

Smiler looked up to meet the dark eyes of Ivy (who liked to be called Pat) Bagnall. “Hullo,” he said.

“You're Johnny Pickering, aren't you? Remember me?”

Smiler said, “'Course I do. Pat Bagnall.”

“You still living in Warminster?”

“Yes, sort of. Just outside.”

“Ever go to the Youth Club?”

“No. I don't go for that scene.”

“You ought to try it. Like to come one night with me?” She said it with a smile and a little toss of her head which Smiler liked. But a youth club was the last place he wanted to visit. People who ran youth clubs asked questions and took an interest in you.

“Can't really,” he said. “I work most nights.”

“Where?”

Smiler did some quick thinking. “Oh, a garage down Heytesbury way.” To change the subject, he went on, “You like it here?”

“So-so. But I'm thinking of getting another job.”

The Runaways

Smiler, giving up the idea of buying a battery, said, "Well, see you around sometime."

After work the girl at the cosmetics counter said to Pat, "Who's that chap I saw you talking to? One with a green parka."

"Oh, him. He's just a chap I know."

"Dyes his hair, don't he? And uses suntan stuff?"

"'Course not."

"He does, you know. Comes in regular once a fortnight." The girl giggled. "And they say us girls is the vain ones."

That night, as Mrs. Lakey and Miss Milly sipped at their after-dinner whisky and Marsala, Mrs. Lakey said, "That boy. He's good with animals. Got Captain Black's brute of an Alsatian right under his thumb. Dog would lick his boots if he said so."

"Animals are good judges," said Miss Milly.

"So would people be if they used their ears and eyes. Anything about him ever worry you, Milly?"

"No. He does his work and he's got a good appetite. Polite, cheerful, and clean—for a lad. Why?"

"I just wondered, Milly. Did you ever get to see his aunt?"

"Not yet. I haven't been over that way."

"Well, don't bother. I met old Judge Renton in Warminster yesterday. He lives Crockerton way. Asked him about the boy and his aunt. Said she was a good, solid body. Spoke well of the boy, too. So don't bother, Milly. You've got enough on your hands already." Mrs. Lakey picked up a newspaper and hid behind it.

By the beginning of April Yarra was very close to her cubbing time and had grown heavy and full in the belly. Now, when she hunted a hare or rabbit, she killed her quarry quickly because she did not like to run at top speed for long. She found food and water easy to come by. She lived mostly in the Sherman tank, though she now had other sleeping places as well.

At Longleat Park there had been no news of her since they had lost her in the snowstorm. This worried the cheetah warden, who feared she might have had some accident and been killed. Her carcass might be quietly rotting in some lonely thicket or gully. On the other hand, he realized that she might have found her

way up onto the plain, and he had asked the land wardens to keep an eye out for her.

So far none of them had sighted her, chiefly because she moved about during the early morning and late evening. However, many of the birds and animals knew Yarra. A carrion crow marked her morning and evening rounds. When she killed, he would circle aloft until she had eaten, and then move down for his pickings. The deer knew her, and moved fast when her scent came on the wind. One or two lucky hares, who had escaped her, knew her.

The only human who saw Yarra during this period was Smiler. One April day, when the fat leaf buds were beginning to green the trees and the sheltered banks held the pale full glow of primroses, Smiler lost Lemon Drop on a walk up the valley. He missed the dog when he got back to the kennels. It was four o'clock and both Miss Milly and Mrs. Lakey were out. So he shut up the other dogs and went in search of Lemon Drop, knowing where he would probably find him. At the top of the valley was a small wood of lofty, smooth-barked beech trees, and Lemon Drop had a passion for squirrel hunting there.

When Smiler was fifty yards from the trees he heard Lemon Drop barking. He could tell he was at the top end of the wood, which was bounded by a wire fence to prevent cattle straying onto Salisbury Plain. He went into the wood and found Lemon Drop at the foot of a tall beech tree growing beside the fence. The dog was looking upward and barking furiously.

Smiler looked upward, too, and immediately stood transfixed. Lying along a thick branch was Yarra, glaring down at the dog from a height of about fourteen feet. She now and again gave a threatening hiss and switched her long tail to and fro.

For a few moments Smiler saw her clearly, the sunlight catching her orange-and-black pelt, one foreleg dangling over the bough. Then she saw him. He was a big human being and she knew better than to stay where she was. She rose and leaped from the branch, clear over the boundary fence onto the plain. She was soon lost over a rise in the ground.

Lemon Drop rushed to the fence, barking and growling. Smiler slipped the lead onto his collar and dragged him away, protesting

The Runaways

and whining. He decided that the best thing he could do was to forget that he had ever seen Yarra. He knew that the plain was used by the army, and soldiers, he argued, could well look after themselves. If he reported Yarra to Mrs. Lakey it would bring the police around and attract too much attention to himself.

When Smiler got back to Danebury House, Mrs. Lakey and Miss Milly still had not returned, but Joe Ringer, the dogmeat man, was there. His little green van was in the yard and he was off-loading dogmeat into the storehouse.

"Where've you been then, Johnny? I could have pinched the silver from the house and helped myself to a dozen eggs."

"Lemon Drop went on the loose," said Smiler.

"Itchy feet and a sharp nose he's got. But too big for delicate work like . . . well, let's leave it at that." Joe winked.

Smiler knew exactly what he meant, because everyone knew that Joe was a poacher in his spare time. He was a slight, wiry, middle-aged man who had worked around Warminster and Heytesbury for fifteen years. He lived alone in a small cottage, and he lived like a king. Whether in season or out, Joe fed himself and his friends on the fat of the land—trout, pheasant, partridge, delicious rabbit stews and baked grayling. Also, there was always a large cask of cider just inside Joe's kitchen door. When he had given Smiler supper after taking him to the Southampton football match, Smiler had been so full of food and cider that he could hardly cycle home. Sometimes Joe let Smiler drive the old green van on the road between Danebury House and Heytesbury.

Joe, who was curious about everyone and everything, knew perfectly well that Smiler (Johnny to him) had no aunt living at Crockerton. But because he liked Smiler, he kept what he knew to himself. He said now, "What you doing Sunday next?"

"Nothing," said Smiler.

"Well then, I got an order for some early peewees' eggs. Like to help me collect 'em?"

"Peewees?"

"Lapwings, Johnny. Them birds what nest up on the downs. Could be some laying already. Ten bob a dozen I can get. Give you a quarter of what we make. All right?"

"Yes. I'd like that, Mr. Ringer."

"Right then. My place. Eight o'clock. And don't blab it around. The eggs is protected."

"Protected?"

"By law. Shouldn't take 'em. But if nobody did the things they shouldn't the world would stop going round."

When Smiler got back to Ford Cottage that evening, he paid his usual visit to the house to look at the letters which had been delivered while he was away. There was no postcard from Major Collingwood. What Smiler didn't know was that Mrs. Bagnall that morning had received a card at her own house from the major. It said that he and his wife—who was now in good health—were coming back on Sunday afternoon.

WHILE Joe was talking to Smiler, Yarra was making her way across the plain to her new sleeping place. The evenings were much longer now. After the soldiers had gone there was still a good two hours of daylight. She went north for about three miles, then up a long barren slope studded here and there with turf-topped weapon pits. She reached the top of the slope and came out on its ridge.

Below her was a long, narrow valley running away to her right toward the far stretches of the plain. On the far side of the hill and lower down, there was a narrow road and a collection of village houses with roofs and windows shattered, gardens wild and overgrown. Beyond the houses on a rising slope, partly seen through bushes and trees, was a gray stone church. Lost and isolated in the miles and miles of plain, the village held no human life except when the soldiers came.

Yarra dropped down the steep valley-side. Fifteen feet below the ridge grew four or five ash and alder trees. Behind them, perfectly screened by briers and thorns, was an opening just big enough to take Yarra's body. Inside, a narrow passageway curved back a couple of yards and then opened out into a circular den about five feet in diameter. Over the years it had been the home of rabbits, badgers and foxes. It was dry and warm, and Yarra meant to have her cubs there.

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She went into it now. In the half gloom she scraped at the loose chalk floor, then dropped to it and made herself comfortable. She lay, stretched flat out, her legs thrust away from her body. Suddenly she twitched and stirred and gave a little growl. Inside her one of the cubs had kicked and moved.

Within the next forty-eight hours Yarra was due to cub.



YARRA had her cubs at six o'clock on Saturday evening. It had been a beautiful, warm April day. She lay on the patch of chalk just outside the cave entrance, blinking her eyes in the sun. Two cuckoos exchanged calls most of the morning. Once a jay sat in an ash above Yarra and scolded and shrieked at her. The movement in her belly went through her in slow waves and she changed her position frequently to find ease.

As the afternoon finally wore away, Yarra got up and went into the gloom of the cave. Within an hour two cubs were born, a male and a female. They were little larger than kittens. Their eyes were shut and there were only the faintest markings on their gray bodies. Yarra nuzzled the cubs close to her and licked and groomed them. After an hour they found her dugs and began to suck.

Yarra lay happily with them, her head facing the cave entrance, her ears alert for any sound. When darkness came the cubs slept,

cradled in the warm fur of her belly. Yarra caressed them with her muzzle. The restlessness had gone from her and she was at peace.

With the coming of dawn she felt hungry. She stood up. The cubs sprawled away from her clumsily and then found one another. They huddled blindly together as Yarra left the cave.

She went up over the valley ridge onto the wide plain lands. Suddenly she caught a familiar scent. As she froze and surveyed the ground, a small fallow deer took to its feet ahead of her and went away like the wind. Yarra's body was lighter now and there was a fierce joy in her that spurred her on as much as her hunger. She ran down the deer within a hundred yards, bowling it over. The two animals rolled in a flurry of flying legs, and when they came to a stop Yarra's jaws were clamped across her quarry's neck. The deer died quickly and Yarra settled to eat.

She ate part of the belly and one of the haunches, leaving most of the hide untouched. Then she left the carcass and turned back toward the valley. High above her the carrion crow had seen the kill. When Yarra left he moved in to have his breakfast.

Yarra did not go straight to her cave. She moved along out of sight of the valley and the deserted village, where yesterday she had seen a land warden's patrol car. When she was directly above the cave, she came back over the ridge, her silhouette low against the skyline, and dropped down the few feet to the opening.

Inside the cave the cubs had become separated and were mewling and shivering. Yarra gathered them into the warmth and shelter of her belly fur. They soon found her dugs and began to suck. Yarra lay back as they fed and purred softly.

SMILER was up early that morning, too. He had a quick breakfast of cheese and crackers in the barn, washed himself in his bucket and then cycled off to Joe Ringer's cottage.

Joe was waiting for him by the van. To Smiler's surprise Joe drove into Heytesbury and then took the road up to the plain past Danebury House. He stopped at the post-barred entry and had Smiler get out and raise the pole for him. Smiler asked about the notices about unexploded missiles.

"Eyewash," said Joe. "They pinched the land from the public

and now they don't want 'em a-tramping over it. But the officers and their friends shoot and hunt over it. Think they'd do that if there was land mines and such like about? No, me lad, most you'll find is maybe a shell what ain't gone off when it should."

Joe drove along the road for about a mile to an abandoned Nissen hut with both ends missing. He drove the van into the arched iron span and it was effectively hidden from sight.

A few minutes later they were moving over a small plateau hunting for the lapwings' nests. Joe had a pair of field glasses and would sit watching the birds in the air or for bird movement on the ground. The peewits nested right out in the open. They always landed some way away from their nests and then moved through the long grass toward them. Joe had no trouble finding a few nests, but Smiler was far from expert. He was standing looking about him when Joe said, "Go on, Johnny—you got a nest there."

"Where?" said Smiler.

"Right under yer nose," said Joe, pointing.

Smiler looked down. A yard in front of him on the almost bare ground was a shallow depression with three eggs in it. The green-and-brown eggs blended perfectly against their background.

"Only one from each nest, mind," said Joe. "Mother Nature's a generous old gal, but she don't like greedy people."

They spent the whole morning looking for nests and collecting the eggs, which Joe packed into small boxes. Once he caught Smiler by the arm and pulled him down quickly. "Stick your head between your legs and your hands under your arms—like this. And don't move!"

Smiler obeyed. Not far away he heard the sound of a passing car. "What is it, Mr. Ringer?" he asked, head between his knees.

"Land warden. But he won't see us. Not at this distance. White face and hands is the giveaway. Right now we look just like a couple of big molehills." When the noise of the car died away, Joe raised his head and winked at Smiler.

Confident under the protection of Joe, Smiler thoroughly enjoyed himself. He was tempted to tell Joe about Yarra, but in the end he decided against it. If they should come across Yarra by accident, Joe would know how to deal with the situation.

At midday they went back to the van to eat. Joe had loaded aboard cold pork sausages, hard-boiled eggs, bread and cheese, and two bottles of cider. After they had eaten, Joe said, "Now I'll show you where me old daddy was brought up."

He then took Smiler on almost the same line cross-country that Yarra had taken a few days before. When they came to the valley which held the deserted village, Joe sat down on the slope.

"That's Imber village, Johnny. What's left of it. Prettiest village on the whole of the plain it was till the army folk took it. See the church? My grandmammy's buried there. And my daddy grew up in a house that ain't standing no longer."

He told Smiler all about the place: how when the Second World War came, the people all had to leave so that the village could be used for training American and British troops in house-to-house fighting. The same training still went on. "I tell you, Johnny," Joe said, "when the folk had to leave this place it broke many a heart. 'Course, *they* very kindly out of their big military hearts lets 'em come back once or twice a year. Special treat to have a service in the church."

Smiler said, "It must've been nice living up here."

"Well, that's what comes of fightin' and having wars." Joe lay back and laughed. "Know somethin', Johnny? A real secret? They took me for the army a long time back. But I upped and run, and they never caught me. Never. I'm a deserter of long standin'—and you're the first one I ever told, Johnny."

"Oh, I won't tell anyone, Mr. Ringer."

"Don't keep givin' me that Mr. Ringer bit, Johnny. I'm Joe to me friends."

Because Joe made him stop and have supper in his cottage, Smiler was late getting back to Ford Cottage. He cycled through the gloaming, and at the river bridge he stopped and looked at the water. Joe had promised to teach him all about trout fishing—in season and out.

"No findanglin' about with flies. You want a big trout—then you want a big worm on the hook." He was going to show him his way around Salisbury Plain, too. The thought of the plain gave Smiler a warm, excited feeling: maybe he'd see Yarra again. At supper he

had asked Joe what he should do if he met the cheetah, say, on the plain. Joe had said, "Just stand your ground, lad, and stare it out. She'd go. Specially with a lad of your size. Now, if you was a little nipper . . . well, that might be different. But animals mostly want nothing to do with humans. . . ."

Happy, though tired, Smiler continued on his way.

Within a few seconds his happiness had gone. As he drew level with the courtyard entrance to Ford Cottage, he saw that the gate was open and a car was parked in the yard. From the kitchen window a light shone, and there were lights in the sitting room and the main bedroom. Major and Mrs. Collingwood were back!

Smiler groaned quietly to himself, "Oh, crikey! Oh, holy, smoking crikeys!" At that moment a fat drop of rain splashed onto his hand. In two minutes the rain was lashing down, churning up the surface of the river and sending Smiler racing for shelter—the only shelter he knew.

He cycled back up the hill, hid his bicycle in a coppice, and then slipped around and into the barn. Standing at the dusty window in the loft, he stripped off his parka and watched the house. What was he going to do? *What was he going to do?* Then, pulling himself together, he began to give himself a good talking-to. "Samuel M.," he said, "you've taken a little water aboard, but you aren't sunk yet by a long shot. Just think it all out! Nice and cool! No panic! *No panic!*"

INSIDE Ford Cottage, Major Collingwood was in the sitting room having his coffee after a late supper. He got up and went to the corner cupboard where the drinks were kept. He had had a long traveling day and he felt like having a glass of brandy with his coffee. As he poured himself the brandy, his eye fell on the box of cigars. He reached out for it and then changed his mind. He did not often smoke cigars, keeping them mostly for his guests.

Upstairs Mrs. Collingwood went into the bathroom to set out fresh towels. As she drew the curtains she noticed some small brown stains and frowned to herself. They looked like rust marks, she thought. But how could curtains go rusty? She puzzled over it for a moment and then put it out of her mind.

Downstairs Major Collingwood sat contentedly with his brandy and coffee. He was happy because he was home, and even happier because his wife was fully recovered. His eye fell on the sixpenny bottle on the bookshelf. It looked just the same as when he had left it (which it should have done because Smiler had replaced all the sixpences he had borrowed). When it was full, the major promised himself, he would buy a present for his wife.

SMILER had set the alarm clock for five o'clock, and when it woke him he got up and set about his plan of evacuation. He gathered all his spare clothes into a bundle and put his money box and the clock in his parka pocket. Keeping the light from his bicycle lamp down low, he tidied up the loft. He left the transistor set in full view on a hay bale. Then, not without some sadness because he had come to think of it as home, he left the barn.

He got the bicycle and rode down to the stone bridge, pausing to look back at the cottage where Major and Mrs. Collingwood were sleeping soundly. Sometime, he thought, the major would find his letter and the transistor set, and miss his clothes and the bicycle. What would he do then? Report to the police? Anyway, thought Smiler, there was nothing he could do about it except someday send the major the cost of replacements.

He began to ride slowly to work and reached Danebury House in good time, as he had intended. He knew that Mrs. Lakey never appeared out of the house before half past seven. He rode around to the stable and put all his stuff up into the loft under a bale of straw. Then he picked up the eggs which had been laid overnight and took them down to the kitchen.

While he was there Mrs. Lakey came in. She gave him an odd look and said, "You're around early this morning, boy. Bad conscience or bad dreams, or both?"

"It was all that rain, Mrs. Lakey. I couldn't sleep."

"At your age you should sleep through a hurricane."

This morning his mind wasn't really on his work. Last night in making his plans he had been confident, but now he wasn't so sure about them. People liked you and were friendly to you, but when it came to doing a real favor . . . well, that was a horse of a

different color. However, he couldn't be gloomy for long. It was such a splendid April morning. Blackbirds and thrushes were filling the air with riotous song, and the paddock, when he exercised the dogs, was a sheet of green enamel.

At the end of the day Smiler rode up the valley to Joe's cottage and left his bicycle and belongings inside the garden gate. He went around to the back of the cottage and found Joe repainting the faded lettering on the side of his green van: JOS. RINGER—DEALER—ALL GOODS HANDLED—LOWEST PRICES.

Joe turned and said, "Hullo, Johnny. Finished for the day?"

"Yes, Mr. Ringer."

Joe frowned. "Joe it is and Joe it must stay. What you hoppin' about from one leg to the other for?"

"I got a bit of a problem, Joe."

"Is it economic, personal or religious? Help offered for all but the last."

Smiler hesitated and then he blurted out, "I got to find lodgings, Joe. And . . . I thought you might be able to help me."

Joe grinned. "Seeing as we're friends, and that's what friends is for, eh? But what you want lodgings for? Don't tell me you've had an up-and-downer with your auntie?"

"No, we haven't quarreled. It just is . . . well . . ." Smiler didn't like telling Joe a lie, but for safety's sake he had to. "She's gone away. Her sister's very sick. Down in . . . Bristol."

Joe said, "And your aunt only heard about it this morning and had to pack her gear and hump it away to Bristol?"

"Yes."

"Short notice, eh? Who's going to look after the bungalow?"

"The woman next door."

Joe considered Smiler very closely, his face, brown as polished oak, half thoughtful, half smiling. Then he said, "Johnny, me lad, I'm a man as likes to keep his own business to hisself. I make a living and the ways I do it ain't always by the book. But I haven't never done anything really bad. You know what I mean by that?"

"I think so, Joe."

"You'd better *know* so, Johnny. I mean like I wouldn't want to help anyone to find lodgings that had, say, pinched money out of

the church box, or who'd think nothing, say, of bundling a poor old lady off a pavement and pinching her handbag. So give me a straight answer, Johnny. You ever done anything like that?"

Smiler hesitated. He said, "I pinched a few comic books sometimes, and maybe a bottle of milk or a bar of chocolate. But I didn't ever do anything bad like you said. Not ever."

Joe nodded. "Just like I thought." He stood up. "Well, it just so happens that I like a bit of young company about the place. And it just so happens that there's two bedrooms here and I only uses one. And I ain't out to make a profit from a friend—so you can have the room for a quid a week. Make your own bed, keep your room tidy, help in the house—and the yard! Suit you?"

Delighted, Smiler cried, "Oh, thank you, Mr. Ringer!"

Joe frowned. "'Nother thing. Every time you call me Mr. Ringer you muck out the pigpen."

"I won't forget, Joe."

"And Johnny, I don't think as I would mention your change of address to Mrs. Lakey and Miss Milly. They mightn't think I was a fit and proper person for you to lodge with."

"Of course they would. You're super."

"All the same, don't let on. What women don't know won't worry 'em. Bring your stuff in, and then we'll go get ourselves a couple of fat trout for supper."

AT THE time when Smiler was taking his belongings into Joe's cottage, Yarra was coming out of her den on the hillside. All day there had been a movement of tanks and trucks through Imber village and the crackle of blank ammunition being fired. Once a badly aimed mortar bomb had exploded on the ridge thirty yards behind the cave. Yarra, touchy now that she had young to protect, had grown angry. She was also hungry, but she would not leave the den until the men had gone from the village.

When at last the valley and village were peaceful, Yarra left the cave and moved swiftly up onto the ridge. The dry, tawny grasses of winter were marked now with new growths. Trefoils and small harebells showed their blossoms on the rabbit-bitten bare patches. Yarra's keen eyes marked every movement around

her: the flight of an early bee, the dance of a small hatch of flies above a rain pool, the flirt of wings and the scut of a rabbit's tail.

High above Yarra three pairs of eyes watched her. Two circling buzzards drifted in her wake, waiting for her to make a kill. And sliding crosswind below them, the carrion crow watched her, too. He knew that if she made a kill the buzzards would give him no peace to take a supper from the leavings. But this was the time of the year when Nature began to spread her banquet for the predators. Nests were filling with young birds, and the warrens held young rabbits. The carrion crow, an ancient, weathered bird of the plains, knew that any hole or cranny was likely to hold something good to eat.

For many days now he had seen Yarra coming out of her cave and he was curious. He watched her move away into a fold of the plain, then flapped down to settle on an ash outside the entrance. He cocked his head and listened, but could hear nothing because the cubs were deep in milk-gorged sleep. He sat there for ten minutes, the sun striking turquoise and purple sheens from his tail feathers. Then he uttered a bad-tempered *kwaarp*, flew to the ground and stalked slowly into the cave. When his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom the crow saw a slight movement at the back of the cave as one of the cubs stirred in its sleep. He moved forward cautiously, his great black beak held ready to thrust. One blow would pierce the skull of a young rabbit or kitten.

On the plain Yarra put up a hare from a small hollow filled with dead bracken drift. It was one which she had chased before. Then it had escaped by diving under a derelict tank, but this time there was no such refuge in sight. The hare raced away with ears laid back. He could see Yarra gaining on him, no matter how much he swerved and switched. When she was three feet from him she went into her killing leap. Desperate, the hare produced the only trick he had to offer. As Yarra took off he stopped dead in his tracks. Yarra sailed right over him, overshooting him by a yard.

The hare flashed away. Yarra, angry and hungry, screwed sideways as she landed, her talons tearing up grass and soil. In fifty yards she was on his tail again—and this time she did not miss.

In the cave on the hillside the carrion crow was standing by the

cubs. Although he had never seen anything like Yarra before, the cubs were no surprise to him. He had killed many litters of wildcat kittens. These were kittens, young and tender. They were lying a little separated and the crow chose the larger for his kill. He lowered his beak and prepared to jump in and thrust with all his power. At that instant a shadow passed quickly over the mouth of the cave.

The crow swung around to face Yarra as she came quickly into the cave, carrying the hare in her mouth.

It was the last thing he ever saw. Yarra dropped the hare and leaped for him. Her jaws took him under the neck as he tried to fly up. She killed him and then shook him so that long black feathers floated about the cave. Then she dropped him and went to the cubs, waking them as she nuzzled them. They had been saved because, as Yarra had settled on the grass to eat her kill, a new instinct had been born in her. It was the instinct to take food back to her lair for the cubs, though it would be many days yet before they were ready for solid food.

At Ford Cottage, Major Collingwood came into the kitchen. He had been puttering around the garden and barn. He was a kind, pleasant-looking man, his dark hair well streaked with gray.

He said to his wife, who was mixing up eggs for an omelet, "You know, love, some blighter's pinched that old bike from the barn."

Mrs. Collingwood smiled and said, "Then you should be glad. It was just a load of old junk."

"It's funny," said the major. "Not just about the bike. But I got a funny feeling in the barn, as though something's been about."

"Well, perhaps it's the one who had the sardines, because I'm quite sure Mrs. Bagnall would never have taken them."

"You mean you've missed sardines? From in here?"

"Either that or I miscounted before we went away. Six cans, I thought. Now there are only three."

"How could you possibly remember?"

"A woman does. Now go and get cleaned up for dinner."

Major Collingwood went upstairs, looking thoughtful. Since he had done all his service in the Corps of Royal Military Police,

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he rather enjoyed a puzzle or a mystery. His wife had mentioned the marks on the bathroom curtain, and he now studied them carefully before beginning to tidy up.

It was a few days before the trout-fishing season opened officially, but that made no difference to Joe. He was about to give Smiler his first experience of poaching trout.

They went down to the river below Joe's cottage. Here, across the stream, was a set of hatches that could be raised or lowered to regulate the flow of water to the weir pool below.

Joe tied a hook on the end of a spool of nylon line which had a small stick through the center of it. Then he threaded several worms on the hook and clipped a heavy lead weight onto the line. He dropped the line into the water and paid it out very gently as the current took the lead weight slowly downstream along the riverbed.

"You sits here like this, Johnny me lad," he said. "And you looks all innocent and enjoyin' the view. Then, if'n a river keeper shows up, you just lets go the spool. The whole lot sinks and you come back next day and fish it out." As he spoke he paid out line slowly. "Otherwise you just pays away the line like this. Sooner or later one of them big trout below the hatch what the fishing gents can't ever get with their little bitty flies will go for the worms. And let 'im take it all. No striking like the fly-fisher folk do. That old trout'll hook himself in no time. Like this one! Whoa!"

The line in Joe's hand suddenly streaked away and downstream a fish broke water in a great silvery jump. Joe held the line firm as the trout dived and darted all over the pool. Then he hauled the fish in without any finesse. He smacked the head of the trout across a wooden post, unhooked it and dropped it into his pocket. He said, "Now then, you have a go. I've got my supper."

Smiler paid out the line as Joe had shown him, and within five minutes he had caught his supper. It was a beautiful brown trout, flecked with red and yellow spots.

"Kill 'un quick. That's a kindness some of these fancy fishers don't always bother about. That's a nice fish. Pound and half. It'll eat like nothing you've ever tasted before."

Later, they both sat in Joe's kitchen, eating grilled trout and drinking cider (Smiler being very careful how much he took, and Joe treating it like water). Smiler, as he washed up the supper things afterward, remembered how worried he had been about how it would all turn out. And it couldn't have turned out better. Though what he would have done without Joe, he just didn't know. "Samuel M.," he told himself, "don't you ever forget what a good sort Joe is . . . and one day you've got to find some way of paying him back. Say, for instance, you got really rich. Well, then you could buy Joe a new van."

As he stood there daydreaming there wasn't a cloud on his horizon. In five or six months his father would be back.

WHILE Smiler daydreamed in his new lodgings, Major Collingwood and his wife were having their after-dinner coffee. The major went to get himself a glass of brandy. This time, seeing the cigar box and feeling extra happy to be back because, after all, there was no place quite like home—particularly when you had a wife like Mrs. Collingwood—he told himself that he jolly well would have a cigar with his brandy.

So he opened the cigar box and found Smiler's letter. As he looked at it, the telephone rang in the hallway and Mrs. Collingwood went to answer it.

Major Collingwood liked the tone of the letter. Whoever "Hunted" was, he was a decent sort of chap with some kind of conscience. The major had already found the transistor set in the barn, though he had not yet told his wife. The letter offered him a little detection work which he felt might fill many a long hour. However, because he knew his wife might be upset at the idea that someone had used the house while they were away, he decided to trace Mr. Hunted quietly on his own.

When the major went up to bed he took a closer look at the bathroom curtain, and then a look at the contents of the bathroom cabinet. He smiled to himself. If you used dark brown hair dye it could only be to make your hair darker, surely? But if you used suntan stuff before summer came. . . . Well, that was interesting now, wasn't it? He would have to think that one out.

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THE NEXT MORNING Smiler rode to work as happy as a lark. He went about his work humming a ditty that Joe sang sometimes: "*Go tell Aunt Rhody the Old Gray Goose is Dead.*" Every time Miss Milly heard him outside she would smile and nod. Mrs. Lakey said to herself, "That boy's worse than having a canary about the place." But even she was pleased, because the only thing with a long face she liked was a horse.

It was the beginning of two months of bliss for Smiler. April ran into May, and early summer smiled on the valleys and plains. The primroses went and the bluebells came. The trout and grayling grew fat on flies, nymphs and caddis grubs. The fledglings feathered up and felt an urge in their wings that made them restless in their overcrowded nests.

Up on the plain Yarra's cubs opened their eyes, and their pelts began to take on the characteristic cheetah markings. Yarra brought them small birds, mice, and rabbits and hares. They grew stronger and steadier on their feet, and when they were bored they fought one another. The male would sometimes explore toward the mouth of the cave, but Yarra would cuff him back.

Smiler, too, began to know the plain well, for Joe often took him up there poaching. Sometimes of an evening, for the evenings had now grown long with daylight, Smiler would borrow Joe's field glasses and go up on the plain by himself. He came to learn every dip and slope, every hollow and valley-side for miles around the deserted village of Imber. He loved to lie just below some ridge-top and watch the wild sweeps of country. Through the glasses he came to know the foxes and buzzards and, on the fringe of the plain above Danebury House, he saw an old boar badger.

But the thing that really excited Smiler was that he *had* seen Yarra—twice. He had not told Joe, for the reason that Joe often spent the evening at the Angel Inn at Heytesbury. When Joe took too much cider aboard he had a habit of slipping the guard on his tongue, and Smiler didn't want Yarra caught. Her freedom had somehow become linked with his own. He felt in a funny way that it would be unlucky for him if he ever betrayed her.

He first saw her through his glasses on a Sunday evening. She was some way from Imber, hunting. He picked her up as she came

quickly over a skyline. She took a hare, and he witnessed the tremendous turn of speed cheetahs can produce. The second time he saw her was from some deserted farm buildings above the village of Imber. He was watching a pair of buzzards circling when one of them suddenly planed downward out of sight. The other buzzard followed. As Smiler brought his glasses down, following the birds, he saw Yarra come over the ridge crest.

She came a few yards down the steep side and then disappeared behind a leafy screen of ash and alder trees. Smiler moved up the opposite side of the valley and examined the trees through his glasses. His observation being now from a different angle, he saw at once the tunnel entrance behind the trees. He guessed that it was Yarra's den, and made a note to keep away from it.

So the days passed for Smiler and Yarra. Smiler grew tanned over his freckles, so that he needed no artificial suntan. But every few weeks he dyed his hair (when it wanted cutting Joe would do it for him in the yard), always choosing an evening when Joe was down at the Angel and being very careful to clear up afterward.

He knew where Pat Bagnall was now working. He had gone into the food market in Warminster, and there she was, sitting at a check-out point. He met her again one Sunday morning when he was down at the river getting some trout for his and Joe's evening meal. She told him she had come down with her father, who was doing something to the hatches. Smiler was glad of the warning because he already had two fat trout hidden in the bushes.

She wanted to know whether he still lived in Warminster. Smiler shook his head and pointed across the field to Joe's cottage. "I'm staying over there—with my uncle, Joe Ringer."

Pat laughed. "My dad knows him all right. Fancy you being related. Dad says he's worse than heron where fish is concerned."

"Uncle Joe's all right, believe me," said Smiler stoutly.

"Where do you work? Still at the garage, Heytesbury way?"

"Not now. Got a job at Danebury House. With Mrs. Lakey."

"Oh, her. My dad knows her, too." She giggled. "Lash-'em-and-bash-'em Lakey, he calls her. But he likes her."

Smiler grinned at the description of Mrs. Lakey. "So do I."

Then, with a sly twinkle, Pat said, "Still dye your hair?"

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Smiler blushed. "What do you mean?"

Pat laughed. "Girl I know in Woolworth's says you used to buy hair dye there—and suntan stuff."

Thinking fast, Smiler said, "What if I did? It wasn't for me."

"For who, then?"

"Well . . . for my uncle Joe."

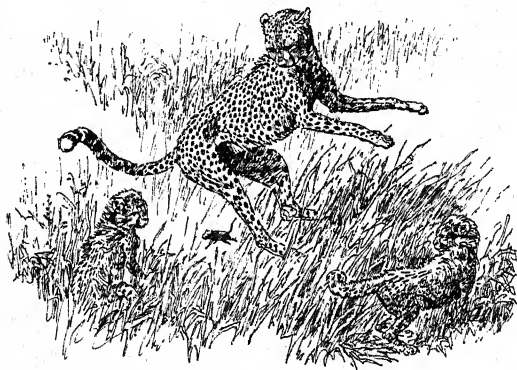
"What's he want it for?"

Desperate, Smiler said, "I can't really tell you. He mixes it all together and . . ." A brain wave came to him. "Well, if I tell you, promise never to let on to anyone?"

"Promise."

"Well, he uses it on white hens' eggs. People prefers brown eggs and Uncle Joe sometimes only has white ones."

Pat laughed. "What a crook. But I won't tell."



Seven

THE cheetah cubs were well over a month old and no longer stayed all day in the den. Early each morning and late in the evening Yarra would take them out onto the hillside or up to the plain. She would catch a mouse or shrew without killing it, then release it so that the cubs could chase it. They would fight and quarrel as to which one should eat it.

During the day Yarra made sure that they never went far be-

yond the entrance to the den. Sometimes when they were out together she would leave them briefly to hunt down a rabbit or a hare, and then trot back to the den, where they would all eat.

It was toward the end of May that Smiler first saw the cubs. One evening when he was watching the entrance to the den, he saw Yarra come out and stand sniffing the air for a while. She moved farther out and the two cubs followed her.

Smiler nearly dropped his field glasses in surprise. Tense with excitement, he watched Yarra pouncing into the long grass after mice, and chuckled to himself when the clumsy cubs imitated her.

He went back to Joe that evening hardly able to conceal his excitement. But he managed to keep quiet. It gave him a nice warm feeling that it was his secret. Also, there was another feeling in him. Yarra had become a wild animal again and was raising a family in the heart of civilized England. Smiler, although town-bred, had now become a country boy. From talks with Mrs. Lakey and Miss Milly, he knew how the countryside was becoming spoiled and how hard it was these days for wild animals to survive. The hedgerows in which the birds nested were being pulled down and wire fences put in their places. He heard about the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers that poisoned birds and animals and seeped into the rivers to kill fish. That Yarra—not even a native animal—was managing to survive in the midst of all this gave him a great sympathy for her. He was determined that Samuel M. wasn't going to give her away.

By now Major Collingwood had discovered the loss of his green parka and guessed, too, what had happened to the old bicycle. He had heard about the escaped cheetah, Yarra. He had heard, also, that a young lad named Samuel Miles, who had run away from a reform school only to be caught by the police, had escaped again in a storm while being taken to Salisbury. This interested the major very much. Hunted's letter, he felt, read like a young lad's letter. He went into the police station at Warminster and got a description of Samuel Miles.

The police inspector, who was a friend of the major, gave him all the facts, then asked, "What do you want to know all this for?"

The major winked and said, "Sounds interesting. If *you* haven't picked him up yet I thought I'd like to try my hand at it."

"Well—you'll have to go abroad if you want him. He wrote a letter to his sister saying he was shipping to sea."

A few days later the major drove to Bristol to see Ethel and Albert. Ethel showed him Smiler's letter, and the major recognized the handwriting at a glance.

"Do you think he really went to sea?" he asked.

Albert said, "Could have done. It's in the blood. That's where his dad is—and won't be back for several months."

"There's more than the sea in his blood," said Ethel. "There's wildness. Fancy—knocking an old lady down and taking her bag."

"I don't believe it!" said Albert. "Smiler wouldn't 'ave done that. And wherever he is, he won't turn up until his dad's back. Thinks the world of him, he does. Thinks he can straighten it out."

"You must both be very worried about him," said the major.

Albert grinned. "No. If ever there was a boy that could look after himself, it's Smiler."

Driving home the major found himself more than ever interested in Smiler. He decided that if the boy had used the cottage and the barn, then someone might have seen him. He asked Mr. Bagnall and got no help from him. He asked Mrs. Bagnall with the same result. Then one day he met Pat Bagnall pushing her bicycle up the hill from the bridge. He chatted with her for a while and then said, "While I was away did you ever see a young lad—say about fifteen—around the place? Tallish, strong lad, he'd be. Darkish brown hair and very suntanned."

Pat considered. It was an exact description of Johnny Pickering. She knew the major well and she liked him. But she liked Johnny, too. So she said casually, "No, sir, I can't say that I did."

And that—for all his cleverness and professional training—was as far as Major Collingwood got for the moment.

It was about this time that Mrs. Lakey discovered that the boy was living with Joe. Mrs. Lakey was a keen fisherwoman. On two Sunday mornings while fishing the pool below the hatchway she had looked across the field and seen Johnny feeding the pigs in

Joe's ramshackle pen. A few days later she tackled Joe in her usual straightforward manner. "Is that boy living with you?"

"What boy, ma'am?"

"Don't wriggle like a worm on a hook, Joe. The boy. He's living with you?"

"Yes, ma'am, he is."

"Why?"

"Well, 'cos in a way, I'm kind of his uncle. Distantly relationed, you might say, to his aunt."

"Why isn't he with his aunt?"

"The one at Crockerton, you mean, ma'am?"

"I've never heard of another."

Joe smiled. "Oh, yes, ma'am, he's got another. What lives in Bristol. And that's where his Crockerton auntie is right now. Lookin' after her, 'cos she's sick. Got a very bad leg. Plays her up somethin' cruel every summer. Not to mention hay fever. Martyr she is to every ache and pain goin'."

"I'm not in the mood for medical fairy stories. The boy lives with you while his aunt's away?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And no doubt you're seeing he doesn't get into bad ways?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Never poaches, does he?"

"Oh, no, ma'am."

"Or worms for trout?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. And he goes to church sometimes of a Sunday."

Joe put on a very serious face. "And I really do hope, ma'am, that you don't think I ain't a fit and proper person to bring up me own nephew. Ain't he given you every satisfaction at Danebury, ma'am?"

"He has, Joe. And that's the way I want it to go on. So, you watch your step with him. He's a good boy as boys go."

Mrs. Lakey privately felt that Joe was as fit a person as anyone for a boy to live with. If fishing was dull she wasn't above putting a worm on a hook herself to get a trout. Apart from all this, Mrs. Lakey was a person who—though always ready to help if asked—was a great believer in letting other people, especially young peo-

ple, work out their own problems. She didn't know what the boy's problem was, but as far as she could see he was coping with it perfectly capably at the moment.

By THE first of June the cheetah cubs were seven weeks old. They could mouse-hunt for themselves, and were sometimes quick enough to take a slow-moving young lark or green plover in the long grasses. Although Yarra still provided the bulk of their food, there were times now when she would cuff them away from the game she brought back. She was deliberately making them hungry to strengthen their own hunting instincts. If she awoke in the night to find them sucking at her dugs she would roll away from them, denying them the little milk flow that remained.

Now that her maternal instinct had been satisfied, there was a new want in Yarra. Like all cheetahs she was a sociable animal and had a need for the company of her own kind. Somewhere in the vastness of the plain there had to be another Apollo to mate with, and other cheetahs to pack and hunt with. It was this that one night took her quartering and hunting into the face of a stiff north wind which was blowing across the plain.

She roamed for an hour, eventually coming out on a high bluff at the northern extremity of the plain. Below, the land fell away into a great valley with cornfields, pastures and patches of woodland. Along the ridge of the bluff ran a barbed-wire fence. Yarra turned left and followed it for a few hundred yards, the wind buffeting at her thick, rough coat. Suddenly a new scent came downwind to her.

She lifted her muzzle into the wind and took the scent. From the edge of a pasture beyond the fence came a low, anxious, bleating sound. Yarra caught the movement of something small and white. Curious, she leaped the fence and began to walk toward the object.

The fence was old and in places had collapsed. Twenty yards from Yarra strands of barbed wire lay coiled and twisted on the ground. Caught by a hind leg in one of the coils was a small Ayrshire calf, white-coated, with a scattering of brown markings. It was no larger than some of the deer Yarra hunted and from its

scent she knew it was good eating. Slowly, with her deliberate, high-shouldered walk, she paced toward the calf. Catching Yarra's scent the calf plunged and tugged against the wire.

The movement excited Yarra and she leaped. She landed on the calf's back and brought it crashing to the ground, her jaws clamped across its neck. The calf kicked and struggled under her as she slowly throttled it, worrying and shaking its neck. High above, the wind roared and whistled through the tall beeches, ripping off leaves and small twigs.

From farther down the sloping pasture the calf's mother had heard the distress calls of her young. She came downwind now, seeking her calf. Yarra heard no sound of the cow's movement because it was drowned by the noise of the gale.

The calf died under Yarra. She opened her jaws and released it. As she did so, she saw the cow almost on top of her.

The Ayrshire was a big animal. She had a sleek white hide blotched with red and brown. Like all Ayrshires she had very distinctive horns. They were long, and curved outward and upward—formidable weapons. Under normal circumstances the cow would never have approached Yarra, but now she lowered her head and rushed at her. Yarra leaped sideways but she was a fraction too late. As she rose into the air, the cow jerked her head with a quick sideways slash. One long, curving horn struck Yarra in the side, daggering deep into her belly.

Yarra gave an angry, spitting snarl of rage and pain as she was flung high through the air. She thudded to the ground, rolled over and then raced away as the cow came charging after her. She leaped the boundary fence, blood dripping from her wound, and started back across the plain toward her den.

With every step Yarra took, the pain in her belly increased and she grew more and more exhausted. Once she halted and sat and licked at the wound. Behind her the gale-flattened grasses were spotted with the trail of her lifeblood.

Now and again she stumbled, only to pick herself up and move on. She reached the top of the ridge above the den and half rolled, half slid down the slope to the cave.

She stood at the entrance, her flanks heaving, her head dropping

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lower and lower. She took a step forward to the opening, staggered and fell. As she struggled to rise again and reach her cubs, she died.

YARRA died on a Friday before daybreak. As morning came the wind slued around into the northwest and brought thick clouds sweeping over the plain. A warm, persistent summer rain began to fall.

The cubs, waking at first light, came out of the den and found their mother. She lay stretched out stiffly, the rain soaking into her pelt. They sniffed around her, not understanding her immobility. The male pawed at her for a moment and butted at her with his head. Then, not liking the hard, driving rain, he trotted back into the den. The female stayed outside longer. She walked around Yarra making small mewling noises and then, getting no response, bad-tempered little spitting sounds. When Yarra still showed no movement, she moved back into the cave.

The rain kept the cubs inside all day, huddled together at the back of the den. Toward midnight the sky cleared and the fresh-washed stars shone down diamond-bright. The male cub, aware of the absence of rain noises in a moment of wakefulness, got up, stretched himself and moved toward the mouth of the cave. He was hungry.

He was two feet from the entrance when there was a noisy, rumbling sound. Something hit him sharply across the neck. He spat and snarled with anger and bounded back to the rear wall of the den—as the roof of the passageway collapsed. Soaked and weakened by the rain, the ancient archway above the entrance had suddenly subsided and sealed up the den.

Outside, the ground above the cave slipped forward in a minor avalanche which half buried Yarra's body, leaving only her head, shoulders and forelegs visible. Later that night a fox caught her scent and came to investigate. It sat for a long time looking at her and then moved on. At first light the two buzzards, spiraling hundreds of feet above, saw her. A white-bellied mouse rummaging in the undergrowth saw her. All of them knew Yarra and all of them kept their distance.

In the cave behind her the two cubs mewed, growled and spat, knowing only their hunger and growing thirst. The male cub found a small puddle of water trapped in a hollow of the passageway floor. He lapped at it and was joined by the female. By mid-morning their water supply had been exhausted.



Eight

ABOUT noon on Sunday, Smiler cycled up to the plain. He hid his bicycle in a field and took one of his many routes to Imber. Then he climbed to his favorite spot for watching Yarra and the den.

The moment he focused his field glasses on the mouth of the den he saw the half-buried Yarra. The glasses brought up clearly the torn turf and the piled debris closing the mouth of the cave. He jumped up and ran down the valley-side, but when he reached the bottom he stopped. Yarra *might not* be dead. She might just be trapped and unconscious. If she were still alive she could be dangerous. "You've got to go cautious, Samuel M.," he told himself.

He went up the other side of the valley at an angle that would take him clear of the cave. Reaching the ridgetop, he went over it and moved slowly back along it until he judged that he was level with the cave. He crawled to the side of the steep drop and had a clear view of Yarra. From the way she lay he was certain

she was dead. Her pelt was matted and dirty and her mouth gaped unnaturally, showing her teeth. Hard against the back of his eyes Smiler felt the sting of tears and fought them back. He and Yarra had, in a way, escaped together. Now Yarra was gone.

Lying there, he buried his face in his arms for a while. Then he slowly got up and went down to the little plateau where Yarra lay. He moved to her and put a hand on her neck. Seeing the blocked mouth of the cave, he guessed how the collapse had happened.

Then he heard very faintly a thin mewling noise. He went to the blockage and put his ear against it. The noise came again, this time mixed with an angry, spitting sound. Smiler scratched his head. The cubs were trapped inside. What on earth was he to do?

"Take it slowly, Samuel M.," he told himself. "Thing Number One is to get them out." They would be hungry, thirsty and frightened—and young animals in that state might be difficult to handle. Then there was Yarra. He had to do something about her.

As he sat there the buzzards up above saw him and swung away. All day they had watched Yarra and had been on the point of closing in for a cautious inspection. A carrion crow watched from a treetop at the valley mouth. Dozens of birds and animals were aware of Smiler as he sat dealing with his problem.

At last he rose and made his way over the ridgetop. Not far away was one of the many fire lookouts which were dotted across the plain. This one, he knew, held an old spade.

WITHIN twenty minutes Smiler was back, digging at the blocked entrance to the cave, working hard and fast. Fortunately the collapsed roof of the den opening was all loose soil and turf. Suddenly his spade went through the last of it and a hole about the size of a man's head opened up.

Inside the cave the sudden sunlight blinded the two cubs. The male arched his back and hissed, half in fear and half in defiance. The female crouched by him and gave a series of small mews.

Outside, Smiler clicked his tongue and made encouraging sounds. In his knapsack was a small roast chicken for his lunch. He broke off one of the legs and held it near the hole. He couldn't see the cubs, but he could hear them moving and crying.

Both cubs suddenly got the scent of the chicken and they ceased their noise. The male cub moved slowly forward toward the daylight. He could see part of Smiler's face, but hunger overcame his fear. He climbed over the loose soil to the opening.

Smiler, shaking with excitement, saw the male's head framed just inside the opening. Behind it, the face of the female appeared. He dropped the chicken leg in front of them. The movement made both cubs jump back a little, spitting and hissing. Smiler, holding himself very still, made soft coaxing noises.

After a moment the male cub came forward slowly, then suddenly pounced, grabbed the chicken leg and disappeared back into the cave, followed by the female. Smiler then tore the rest of the chicken in two and threw one half into the cave. It landed near the female cub, who seized it and ran into a corner.

As they ate, Smiler blocked the opening he had made, piling large turfs and clods of earth into it. The cubs had to be fed and watered, but he could not risk their coming out of the den and escaping. Now that Yarra was dead, *he* had to see that they came to no harm until he could work out a plan for them.

Hating every moment but knowing he had to do it, Smiler dragged Yarra free from the soil that partly covered her. He knew exactly what he must do with her. If he tried to bury her, he could never cover up the evidence of his digging. But scattered all over the plain were old wells which had been dug in years past. The nearest was a quarter of a mile away. Smiler dragged Yarra to the well and pulled aside the timbers which covered it. He let her drop through the gap. As he replaced the heavy planks there were tears in his eyes. It was a moment of great sorrow.

He went back to Imber village and found an old bucket which he filled with water from a spring. He took the bucket to the den entrance and went back again to the village. This time he returned with three short lengths of plank and a battered tin bowl.

For the next hour Smiler worked away, keeping a sharp lookout for any land warden. He enlarged the small entrance to the cave and then tossed the last half of the chicken through to the cubs. They took it and began to quarrel over it. He filled the bowl with water and put that through the opening. To Smiler's delight,

both cubs rushed to it and began to lap thirstily, taking no notice of him. He was tempted to reach through and stroke them, but he was country-wise now, and knew that if you wanted to be friends with an animal you never rushed things.

While the cubs ate and drank, Smiler arranged the three short planks vertically across the mouth of the cave. He fixed the outer planks firmly top and bottom, but left the middle one free at the top so he could pull it up to make an opening. Then, knowing that the cubs were all right for the time being, he left them.

All the way back to Joe's cottage, Smiler occupied himself with his real problem. He had to see that the cubs were taken to Longleat, where they would be properly looked after. That meant he had to telephone the police or someone. And the moment he did so he would have to take off right away from this part of the world. Because even if he made an anonymous call, the news would become public and then Joe would put two and two together. Joe knew how much time he spent up on the plain.

He didn't want to move on. He liked working at Danebury House. He liked Miss Milly and Mrs. Lakey, and he liked Joe (better than anyone), and in a way he quite liked seeing Pat Bagnall now and then. "*But*, Samuel M.," he told himself, "no matter what *you* like and what *you* want to do—you've got to tell about the cubs, and that means you *have got* to move on. Not today. Not this week. But pretty soon."

Sadly, Smiler went back to the cottage and counted his savings. He had thirty-odd pounds, a few bits of clothing and a bicycle. All he needed now was a plan.

Meanwhile, he had the cubs to take care of. This was very hard work. He was up and away from the cottage long before Joe was awake. He would ride up past Danebury House, hide his bicycle and make his way across the plain to the cubs. Food was no problem. He packed his knapsack with dogmeat from Joe's store and dropped a shilling into Joe's cashbox now and then to pay for it. He would give the cubs their breakfast, refill their water bowl, and then shut them up and be back at Danebury in time for work. In the evening he would take some dogmeat from the Danebury Kennel's store and go back up to the cubs.

Within three days the cubs got to know him. When he came to the cave door he would whistle to them. The moment he pulled up the plank they would be waiting for him, snapping or spitting with excitement. But he was worried about giving them exercise. Fortunately the male cub solved this problem.

Smiler arrived on the fourth evening to find that the middle door plank had been butted away and both cubs were playing in the undergrowth. He gave his low whistle. The cubs broke into a fast trot through the long grasses, every high-shouldered movement and graceful stride reminding him of Yarra.

Smiler took out a piece of meat and, holding it high, began to move up to the den entrance. Both cubs followed him. Just before they reached the small plateau, the male cub made a sudden leap toward the meat that nearly took Smiler by surprise. It was a higher jump than he had thought the cub could make.

After that it was easy. Smiler tossed two large chunks of meat into the den and the cubs went in after them. He gave them water and then made the door much firmer so they could not get out. On the way back to the cottage he worked out a plan for exercising the little animals.

It worked perfectly. Next morning he pulled up the plank door and held out his meat-filled knapsack. Both cubs came to it. Smiler moved away and the cubs followed him. When he went back to the cave and threw meat inside, they went after it. That was the beginning of their training, and they learned quickly.

At first they would only follow him so long as he had the meat with him. But by the middle of the next week Smiler could hang his knapsack on a branch and walk off; and instead of sitting obstinately under the tree, as they had the first time, the cubs would go with him. It became a firm rule that the cubs followed him for a walk before returning to the cave to be fed. By this time, too, they would let him handle them and massage their necks, which they loved. Though Smiler was always careful when he did this. Twice the male cub had scratched him inadvertently.

Smiler was delighted with all this. So long as the weather was good and the cubs were fed and watered, there was no hurry about settling their future. The days wore into July and every morning

and evening he would exercise the cubs up the long narrow valley and across a small stretch of plain at its head. If they strayed a little they would come back at the sound of his whistle.

At the valley head one evening a young rabbit got up from the grass and the male cub went after it and caught it. Smiler realized that it would be dangerous to try and take the rabbit from the cub. So he turned and began to walk back toward the den. The female followed him. He whistled to the male and after a moment the cub followed him, carrying his prey.

Slowly, Smiler learned how to handle the cubs in different situations. And he gave them names. The male he called Rico and the female Afra.

One Friday evening Joe said to Smiler, "Johnny my lad, tomorrow afternoon I'm a-going to give you a treat. And don't tell me you don't want to come because you want to go up on that old plain. What you got hidden up there, anyways? A gold mine?"

"I just like being up there, Joe."

"So do I, Johnny. But a change won't do you any harm. We'll be back by six, so you can slip up for an hour after, if you want."

Joe duly gave him his treat, and when Smiler got back he knew exactly how to solve part of his remaining problem.

WHILE Joe was off with Johnny, Major Collingwood was having tea with his wife at Ford Cottage. They were having it out on the lawn overlooking the river. The major, although he still thought about it sometimes, had long ago come to a dead end in tracing Mr. Hunted. He was feeling rather sleepy from the hot sun, and now and again he dozed off as his wife chatted to him. He surfaced briefly to hear her finishing a sentence. "... and although they work him hard enough over there, I thought now in the long evenings he could give you a hand."

"Who, dear?" The major blinked his eyes open.

Mrs. Collingwood laughed. "Why, Johnny, of course."

"Who on earth is Johnny?" asked the major.

His wife shook her head. "Sometimes I think your memory is going altogether. The boy who works for Danebury House, where I go riding sometimes. I've spoken to you about him before."

"Not that I remember."

"Well, he's a nice boy. Tall and strong, with dark brown hair, and sort of freckled under his sunburn. I don't know where Angela found him. She doesn't seem keen ever to talk about him."

The major's old interest in Mr. Hunted had suddenly revived, though he was careful not to show it.

He said, "Oh, yes, I think I've seen him in Heytesbury. Does he wear an old green parka sometimes? Like one I used to have?"

"Yes, he does. Well, I was thinking that if he had the time . . ."

The major didn't hear her because he was thinking, too; thinking that he would like to have a good look at this Johnny.

This he managed to do twice during the next few days. He also met Miss Milly in Warminster the following Monday and learned that Johnny had an aunt, Mrs. Brown, who lived at Hillside Bungalow in Crockerton. The major knew that there was no Mrs. Brown and no Hillside Bungalow, and his certainty grew that Johnny was really Samuel Miles. The major, who was a kind man but one used to army discipline, found himself with a problem. It was more than a week before he came to his decision.

SMILER was never to forget the happiness of his days with Afra and Rico. The movement of the cubs racing and hunting at the top of the valley printed pictures in his mind which he would always remember. Their pelts were taking full color, the orange, black-spotted coats rippling over their muscles. They caught mice, and twice they packed together and ran down a young hare.

Sometimes Smiler lay in the grass and the cubs would romp over him as they played. He hated the thought of the day that was coming, the day already fixed in his mind, when they would have to part company. He would have liked to stay up on the plain with them forever. They could have lived easily. There was water, food to be found, and plenty of shelter. Even in the winter, he reckoned, they would be able to manage. He saw himself in a commodious cave, a fire burning at the entrance, and Afra and Rico lying together, while the winter wind shrieked outside.

One lunchtime Miss Milly said, "That's a bad scratch on your hand, Johnny. I'll bandage it for you."

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Rico had bitten lovingly at Smiler's hand and torn the flesh. While attending to it, Miss Milly said, "Jelly and I are going to dinner with a Major Collingwood at Crockerton on Friday. He asked if you'd care to do a little weekend gardening for him."

Smiler's hair nearly stood on end. "Well, Miss Milly . . . I like to have a bit of time to myself at weekends."

"And you should. I'll tell him to cast his eyes elsewhere."

If he could have told her the truth Smiler would have said that the coming weekend was going to be his last in this part of the world. On Sunday morning he meant to be up early and away in Joe's van with Afra and Rico. It would mean creeping into Joe's bedroom to get the ignition key, but Joe always slept like a log after his Saturday visit to the Angel. Smiler planned to leave a letter for him explaining where he could find the van. The thought of driving the van didn't bother him; under Joe's tuition he had become a fairly confident driver. But the thought of leaving Joe was almost as bad as that of leaving the cubs.



Nine

On Friday evening Mrs. Lakey and Miss Milly went to dinner at the Collingwoods'. They had drinks on the lawn outside the dining room. An occasional trout dimpled the surface of the river and a family of yellow wagtails played along the banks.

Mrs. Lakey and Miss Milly were very old friends of the Collingwoods, so the major did not much relish what he was going to have to do. Being a military man he had decided that it was better to do it quickly. After a few minutes' social chat, he cleared his throat and said to Mrs. Lakey, "Angela, there's something I must discuss with you and Milly. It's about your boy, Johnny."

Miss Milly said, "Johnny's a good boy, Major, but he wants his weekends free. So I'm afraid he doesn't want to garden for you."

"Afraid of a little extra work. Like all boys," said Mrs. Lakey. "Though the boy is furlongs ahead of any other I know."

"I don't mean about working for me," said the major.

"Then what else could you possibly mean, dear?" asked his wife.

"I think I know what maggot has got into your apple," said Mrs. Lakey. "The boy is Samuel Miles, isn't he?"

The major looked at her in astonishment. "You *knew*?"

"Almost from the first. Think I can't spot it when a boy's got something to hide that dyed hair can't cover?"

"Who is this Samuel Miles?" asked Miss Milly.

"Johnny," the major said. "He's escaped from a reform school."

"He's a good, kind, honest boy," said Miss Milly stoutly. "I don't believe a word of anything you're going to say."

Mrs. Collingwood sighed. "So far as I am concerned I would just like to know what everyone is talking about."

"Then listen," declared the major almost crossly. "His name is really Samuel Miles and he's been in this house, dyed his hair, and eaten our sardines, and taken my parka."

Mrs. Lakey smiled and said, "And what is more the boy has no aunt called Mrs. Brown of Hillside Bungalow, and if he escaped from a reform school and then from the police, more power to his elbow. Two things better escaped from I can't imagine."

Pompously, the major said, "He stole an old lady's handbag."

"Never!" said Miss Milly. "What an awful thing to say about Johnny! I think I must have some more Marsala."

Mrs. Collingwood, helping Miss Milly to more Marsala, said to her husband, "Darling, take a deep breath, count ten and then start at the beginning. Funny, I thought it looked like your parka."

The major began to explain, telling the story as he knew it.

One afternoon in Bristol an old lady had been jostled off the pavement by a boy, and had her handbag stolen. A policeman, seeing the act from a distance, had gone after the thief. Turning a corner he had spotted a boy running. He had caught him and found that he was holding the old lady's handbag with ten pounds in it. The boy was Samuel Miles. Miles had denied the theft, though he *had* been in some small scrapes with the police before.

Samuel Miles's story, however, was that he had been standing just around the corner when a boy he knew had come rushing past and tossed him the handbag, shouting, "Hide it!" The boy was one Johnny Pickering and they were not friends. In fact they disliked one another. Samuel Miles had said that, when he was caught, he was running after Pickering to make him take the handbag back.

But, the major explained, in the juvenile court Pickering's father and mother had both sworn that their son had been at home all afternoon. One of their neighbors had sworn the same. The court had decided that Samuel Miles was lying to save himself. They had found him guilty and sent him to a reform school.

At this point Miss Milly said stoutly, "It's not true. Johnny would never do such a thing."

"It's the father and mother of all lies," said Mrs. Lakey.

"I think it's a lie, too," the major agreed. "But the point is, if Johnny is to be proved innocent, we've got to tell the police about him. Then we can have the case reopened and get him cleared. He's worked hard and honestly for you, Angela. He paid back the money he borrowed from me. He's shown resource and initiative in looking after himself and—"

"I think, dear," said Mrs. Collingwood, "that we all understand and agree with you. But it does seem hard to go—"

"Sniveling to the police," said Mrs. Lakey. "But there's some sense in what the major says. How can the law do anything for the boy unless the law has got the boy?" She looked hard at Major Collingwood. "You believe in the boy's innocence?"

"Absolutely. I inquired about the Pickerings. They haven't a good reputation. I think they were lying to protect their son."

"And you think you can clear things for the boy?"

The major said importantly, "Yes. I have friends in the Bristol

police. All we have to do is tell them where Johnny is and then I'll lay a hundred to one we can clear things up."

Miss Milly stood up. "You want to ring up the police *now*?"

"Yes, Milly," said the major.

"Then," said Miss Milly firmly, "don't expect me to sit down and take dinner in your house. How could I, while the police are taking poor Johnny to spend the night in a cell?"

"Milly," said Mrs. Lakey, "ease back in the saddle a bit." She turned to the major. "The boy has been free for months. Twelve hours' delay won't do any harm, and he's not going to run away because he knows nothing of all this—"

"And," interrupted Mrs. Collingwood, "I'm not having my dinner party ruined. We've got smoked salmon and then a beautiful piece of lamb, and a sweet it's taken me all afternoon to make."

The major looked at each woman, then he shrugged his shoulders. "All right. I'll telephone them first thing in the morning."

"Poor Johnny," said Miss Milly. She sat down and took a sip of her Marsala. "Never will I believe that he robbed an old lady."

"We'll prove he didn't," said the major. "But until it can be done, he's got to be held in custody by the proper authorities."

At that moment Mrs. Bagnall, who helped whenever Mrs. Collingwood had a party, appeared and said, "Dinner is served."

WHILE Mrs. Collingwood's dinner party was in progress, Smiler was walking down the valley with Afra and Rico toward their den. The light was fading fast. The jackdaws were returning to their roosts. Fox and badger were beginning their night prowls.

When they reached the entrance to the cave, Smiler knelt down and rubbed the rough-pelted necks of Afra and Rico. Afra purred and nuzzled her head against Smiler's bent knee. Rico turned and closed his jaws gently over Smiler's hand. He knew now just how hard he could hold without harming Smiler. In the pale light the golden eyes of the two animals shone softly, their black face markings giving them a faintly laughing look.

Smiler was aware of a lump in his throat. "Samuel M.," he told himself, "Sunday morning, first thing, you'll be up and away with them. They won't see this old plain again, and neither will you."

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He tossed some meat into the cave and watched the cubs enter. Then he boarded up the entrance and started for home.

When he reached Joe's cottage, Joe was in the kitchen having a last glass of cider before going to bed. "Been up top, Johnny?" "For a bit."

Joe gave him a long look. "Anything special happened?"

"No, I'm just tired, Joe," said Smiler.

Joe said, "Sure there's nothin' wrong? Nothin' that you'd care to tell me about?"

"No, really, Joe. I'm all right."

"All right, Johnny me boy," said Joe. "Up you go then, and get your head tucked under your wing."

So Smiler went to bed, and soon afterward Joe did the same.

At four o'clock in the morning Smiler was wakened by a sharp splatter of gravel against his windowpane. He sat up, puzzled, then crossed to the window and looked down. On the narrow path below he could make out a grayish form.

"Johnny?" A pale face was turned up to him. "It's me, Pat."

"What on earth are you doing here?"

"Come to warn you, Johnny. Get dressed and come on down. Hurry, I got to get home before they finds I've been out."

Smiler dressed in a hurry and went quietly downstairs so as not to wake Joe. Pat Bagnall, in jeans and a thick sweater, was waiting for him in front of the house. She came up to him quickly and took his arm. "Now, you listen to me, Johnny, and don't interrupt 'cos I've got a lot to say, and I've got to say it fast."

Then she told him about the Collingwoods' dinner party and how her mother had overheard the conversation about Samuel Miles, alias Johnny Pickering, through the open windows. When her mother had got back that night she had told her husband all about it, full of the gossip and excitement.

"Crikeys!" said Smiler. "What am I going to do?"

"Don't be stupid. You got to get your things and go."

And Smiler saw that he had to do just that. "It's all right," he said. "I was planning to go—tomorrow. Thanks for coming to tell me. But whyever did you?"

"What a question! Because I like you, of course. And because

I reckoned it was up to you to choose. You can stay and face it out if you want to."

"Not likely. I'm off. Only my dad can clear me up. He knows how to deal with Mr. Pickering and that lot. Gosh, it was brave of you to come."

"'Course it wasn't. You got money, and things like that?"

"Yes."

"Then be on your way. And Johnny"—she came closer to him—"when you're settled you can write to me, if you want."

"'Course I will when it's safe."

She reached forward suddenly and kissed him. Then, with a little bubble of laughter, she was gone, running across the grass.

Smiler watched her go, not knowing quite how he felt but knowing it was a feeling he had never felt before. Then he turned and went quietly back into the house. All his things were more or less packed for his Sunday-morning departure. Now, he had to go a day sooner and there was a big problem. He *had* to get the key to Joe's van. Joe had not been to the Angel that night, and he might wake up. Well, he would have to risk that.

He collected his things and put them quietly on the floor of the little landing. In the darkness he moved stealthily toward the door of Joe's bedroom. He knew exactly where Joe's jacket would be hanging. Slowly he reached out his hand to the doorknob.

At that moment the door opened, and in the growing light from the bedroom window he was faced by the figure of Joe in a white nightshirt, his eyes shut tight.

Before Smiler could recover from his alarm, Joe began to speak in a faraway kind of voice. He said, "Done it ever since a child. Walks in me sleep. No cure for it. Terrible affliction if you lives on a cliff. When I wakes up I don't never know what I've done or heard. Like I might hear two people talkin' under me window. Like I might know one of them's in trouble and got to get away fast and far. And for which purpose there's nought better'n a car, say a nice little green van. That's always assumin' that the one what wants it 'as the key." His hand came up slowly and the palm opened. In it was the van's ignition key.

"Oh, Joe—" began Smiler, but Joe interrupted him sharply.

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"Don't never talk to anyone what walks in 'is sleep. Could give 'em the jumps for the rest of their mortal. Here, lad."

The key was tossed to Smiler, who caught it.

Joe stood there, immobile, but a smile slowly passed over his face. One eye opened and shut in a wink, and he said, "Well, God bless anyone within 'earing at this moment—and send me a post-card sometime just saying—"The old gray goose ain't dead."

He winked once more and then turned back into the room and shut the door. With tears in his eyes and a lump in his throat, Smiler picked up his stuff and ran downstairs. Five minutes later he was driving toward Heytesbury on his way up to the plain.

Tonks saw the green van go by Danebury House and barked his head off until Mrs. Lakey, half in sleep, reached for a cushion and nearly knocked him from the window seat.

In her bedroom Miss Milly lay awake having a little cry and wrestling with temptation. She wanted to get up and drive to Joe's cottage to warn Johnny. But she knew she could not do it. She was a woman of honor, and anyway in the long run it would all be for Johnny's good. After a while she started to chuckle to herself. Imagine her never guessing that Johnny dyed his hair!

And in Joe's cottage, Joe lay abed and chuckled, too. They wouldn't see Johnny for smoke. No more than they had seen *him* when he had run away from the army. Good lad, Johnny was. Wonder what it was that made him so fond of the plain? Animals, he'd bet. . . . Just loved animals, Johnny did. God bless him.

AT THE edge of the plain Smiler got out of the van and lifted the road pole. From there the road ran due north to drop finally into the Imber valley. By now Smiler knew all the roads and tracks like the back of his hand.

The pearl-gold flush in the eastern sky was beginning to strengthen with the coming of the sun. The larks were already aloft and in first song. A pair of greenfinches flitted across the road in front of the van. A kestrel hovered over the tank which Yarra had first used as a shelter, watching for the movement of mice around its rusted sides. There was a heavy dew over the

grass, and the spiders' webs mantling the small bushes were beaded with glittering moisture.

Within ten minutes Smiler was at Imber. He drove the van under the cover of an open barn. Taking his old knapsack in which he had brought some dogmeat, he walked up the valley bottom. He tried not to think that it was the last time he would go to the den. Going by Danebury House and hearing Tonks bark had been a bad moment. He was leaving all the animals there. Then, as he began to climb the steep slope to the cave, he could think of nothing but Yarra. He sniffed hard. Yarra had gone for good. And now he was going . . .

At the den mouth he pulled up the planks and Afra and Rico came leaping out to him. The sight of them cheered him up at once. They were well grown now and their tawny, spotted coats rippled and caught the day's new light as they moved. Rico's tail was long and drooping and could give you quite a crack if he happened to swing it across your face.

Smiler dropped to his knees and Rico, always the greedier, began to worry and paw at the knapsack on his back. "All right, my beauties," said Smiler. "A walk first and then food."

He started off down the steep slope, back toward Imber. Rico raced ahead and began mouse-hunting from tuft to tuft of grass. Afra found a tattered little white parachute from an old signal flare, picked it up and carried it for a while.

The birds and the beasts of the little valley watched them go. The buzzards, flying low at the ridgetop, soared and hung over them. The carrion crow, dealing with a dead rabbit on the far slope, looked up and watched their movements. A deer couched in bracken followed them with large, liquid eyes.

At the small spring Smiler let the cubs drink. When they had taken their fill they followed him up to the van. He opened one of the van's back doors, took meat from his knapsack and tossed it inside. Rico jumped in immediately, but Afra stood her ground and Smiler wondered whether he was going to have trouble with her. He took another piece of meat, held it briefly under Afra's nose and then jerked it into the van. Afra leaped in after it.

Smiler closed and locked the door. He went around and got

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into the driver's seat. The back part of the van was boarded off from the front, but there was a small connecting hatchway. He made sure that it was securely bolted and then drove off.

Some minutes later Smiler was driving down the northern scarp of the plain, not far from the spot where Yarra had been attacked by the Ayrshire cow. In a little while he was off the plain, turning westward along a main road. A mile along the road he drew up. He slipped the hatch bolts and peeped through at the cubs. They both came to the hatchway. Smiler rubbed their masks and then pushed through some meat from his knapsack.

He bolted the hatchway and drove on. He knew exactly where he was going, and he knew all the roads from his many drives with Joe. As soon as he could he left the main road. By now the police might be at Joe's cottage, and if Joe couldn't keep from them the fact that the van was missing they would put out a call for it.

In fact, he need not have worried. Joe had taken Smiler's bicycle to the river and thrown it in. When the police arrived Joe told them truthfully that Johnny and his bicycle were gone. The police never asked him about his van. Joe reported its loss at midday when he went to the Angel.

LATER that morning, not long after Longleat Park had been opened to the public, Apollo, the cheetah male who had been Yarra's mate, was lying along the trunk of a fallen tree. Across the road and the grass two or three other cheetahs were pacing up and down inside the wire enclosure, their eyes on the free parkland over which Yarra had escaped.

A few early cars were beginning to trickle through the animal enclosures. Apollo watched them without interest. He yawned and wrinkled his mask, then snapped at a worrying bluebottle fly.

At that moment a small green van came around the curve of the road behind Apollo and pulled over to the side. In the van was Smiler. He knew all about Longleat Park and its animal kingdom. This was where Joe had brought him for his treat. Smiler had made Joe stay a long time in the cheetah enclosure.

Now he had returned, bringing Afra and Rico with him. Behind

him they moved restlessly in the van, roused by the various animal scents that came to them.

Smiler sat for a moment, wishing he didn't have to go on with his plan but knowing it was the best thing for the cubs. Once it was done, he would have to move on because at the entry to the enclosure he had seen one of the black-and-white Land Rovers of the game wardens.

Smiler drew the bolts and opened the hatch wide. Afra and Rico came to the opening. Smiler held up a piece of meat and then leaned over and opened the door of the cab.

As Rico slid through the hatchway after the meat, Smiler threw it out onto the grass. Rico jumped after it.

Afra came through the hatchway and sat on the seat at Smiler's side. "Go on, Afra!" he urged. But she sat on her haunches and rubbed her head against Smiler's shoulder.

Desperate, Smiler pushed Afra off the seat to the floor. She turned, spat-snapped nervously at him and then lifted her muzzle. A mixture of new and familiar scents came flooding through the open door. She jumped down onto the grass to join Rico.

Smiler pulled the door shut and drove off, sniffing and fighting back the tears which pressed against the back of his eyes. As he went he watched Afra and Rico in the mirror. Rico was crouched on the grass, chewing at his piece of meat. Afra was standing up, slowly swinging her blunt head and long neck as she looked around the enclosure.

Even before he saw them, Apollo had caught the scent of the young cheetahs. As the van drew away they came into view. His head jerked up alertly. Slowly he raised himself to a stalking position and began moving along the fallen tree. Cheetahs in captivity do not always take kindly to the introduction of new members. Suddenly Apollo leaped from the end of the trunk in a long, curving spring. He walked slowly, deliberately, across to the young cheetahs. Afra turned and faced him and then opened her jaws in a silent gape, half menace, half fear. Rico looked up from his meat and rumbled a caution for Apollo to keep away.

The other cheetahs began to move slowly toward the young cheetahs in small, exploratory arcs.

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Apollo moved to Rico and lowered his head. Rico—Apollo's own son—snapped at the big male to guard his meat. Apollo's right forepaw swept out and cuffed Rico away. Rico rolled over and over for about a yard. He came to his feet, shook himself, and then moved confidently back. Apollo had done to him no more than Yarra had sometimes done.

Apollo watched Rico come back and drop to the meat, almost under his muzzle. For a moment Apollo's paw rose and then he let Rico take the meat. Afra was standing just behind him. Ten yards away the other cheetahs had bunched together, all watching Apollo.

Slowly Apollo lowered his head and sniffed at Afra, who made a small complaining sound. Apollo squatted back on his haunches. He yawned, blinking at the sun, and then he dropped flat to the ground, facing the other cheetahs. Afra squatted a foot from him. Rico ate behind him. The cars passed slowly along the road, and the other cheetahs turned and moved away.

Apollo had accepted Afra and Rico. Father, son and daughter were together.

JOE's old green van was found by the police late that afternoon. It was abandoned in a lay-by on a main road twenty miles from Longleat. Lying on the driver's seat was a note that read: "This van belongs to Joe Ringer of Heytesbury. Say to him the old gray goose is still flying."



Victor Canning



Spy rings, hijackings and political skulduggery are the usual stuff of Victor Canning's more than twenty novels. His charming story of Smiler and the cheetahs might not have been written but for a recent British postal strike. This, he says, gave him a period of enforced isolation in his Hampshire village, near the area in which the book is set. The idea for *The Runaways* had been in his mind for some time, and the actual writing took only five weeks.

Born in Plymouth, England, in 1911, Victor Canning left school at sixteen and in the same year sold his first short story. A few years later came his first successful novel, *Mr. Finchley Discovers His England*, and Canning gave up his job in a government office to devote himself to writing. Since then it has been a full-time career, interrupted only by World War II when he served as an artillery officer in North Africa and Italy.

His latest suspense novel, *The Great Affair*, involves stolen diamonds and international gangsters. In contrast to the raffish characters he writes about, Canning is a quiet methodical man who takes great pains to make every detail of story and background completely authentic. His books are enjoyed all over the world and in many languages, including Icelandic.

He is married and has four children and six grandchildren. The family home is a seventeenth-century house which Mr. Canning is in the process of restoring, when he is not yielding to the temptations of the nearby golf course and fishing streams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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